

YOU AND I

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YOU AND I

PLAYS BY PHILIP BARRY

THE YOUNGEST

YOU AND I

IN A GARDEN

WHITE WINGS

JOHN

PARIS BOUND

HOLIDAY

YOU AND I

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY
PHILIP BARRY



SAMUEL FRENCH

Thos R. Edwards Managing Director
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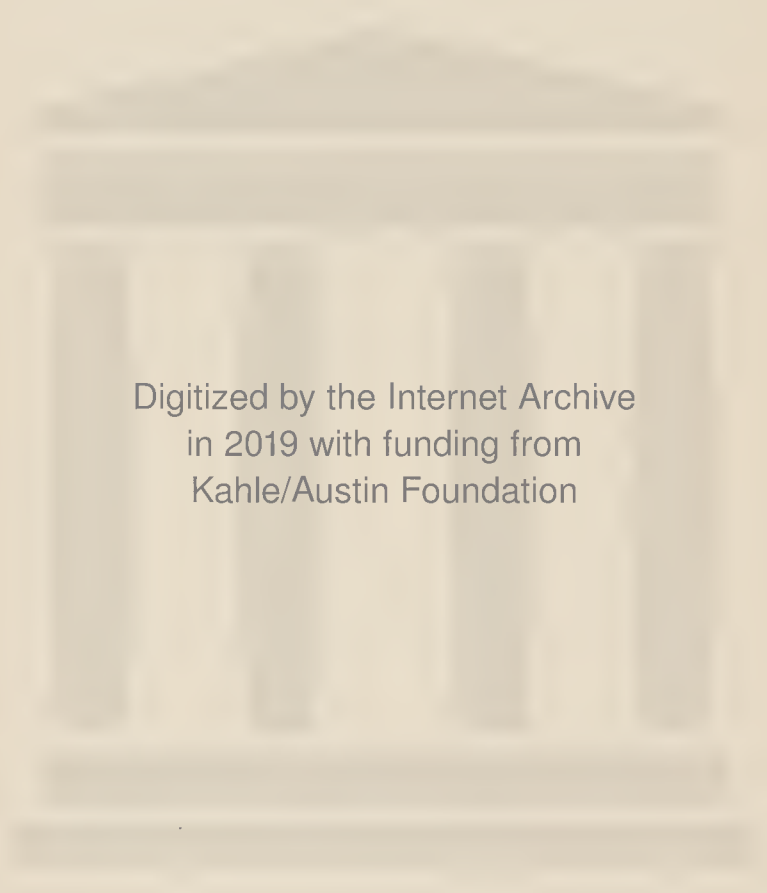
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TO E. S. B. MY FAVORITE PERSON

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“YOU AND I” was first produced by Richard Herndon at the Belmont Theatre in New York City on February 19, 1923. The play was directed by Robert Milton, and the settings were designed by Raymond Sovey, James Shute and Robert Goode.

CHARACTERS

MAITLAND WHITE
NANCY WHITE
RODERICK WHITE
VERONICA DUANE
GEOFFREY NICHOLS
G. T. WARREN
ETTA

ACTION AND SCENE

The action of the play takes place in Maitland White's house in the country near New York. The time is the present.

SCENES

- ACT I: The Library, about seven o'clock on a late September evening.
II: "The Studio" in the attic, an afternoon the following May.
III: "The Studio" later the same evening.

ACT ONE

ACT ONE

MAITLAND and NANCY WHITE's house in the country near New York began as a farm house and has been added to year by year as the family grew, and the family's fortunes prospered. In architecture, it is nearer colonial than anything else. There was always plenty of land, but the orchard, of which MAITLAND is so proud, he planted himself. When NANCY and he bought the place twenty years ago, the room in which you now stand was, with the exception of a kitchen, the entire lower floor. The second beam from the left in the ceiling will show you where the partition came between living and dining rooms.

The library—which is also the main living-room—is a spacious, uneven, and very comfortable room. There is a large white fireplace, with two ample chairs flanking it. A long table stands just away from the Center of the room, a sofa behind it. There are a few more easy-chairs, and a writing-desk. Wherever there is not a window or a door, there are built-in bookcases, filled with books. At Right glass doors open into a kind of sun-room, from which one may proceed through the garden, up into the orchard. The woodwork of the library is a soft ivory. There is no scheme of decoration, but the whole effect is one of warmth and light and color. It is what you would call, not a beautiful, but a charming room.

The time is about seven o'clock of a late September

evening and someone is playing a frivolous tune on the piano in the sun-room. In the middle of a measure, the music stops abruptly. There is a short silence, followed by the bang of a discord. Then, with her head high, thoroughly angry, VERONICA DUANE enters and traverses the library, nearly to the hall.

She is about nineteen, slim, of medium height, with a decidedly pretty, high-bred face, lovely hair, lovely hands, and a soft, low-pitched voice—whatever she may be saying. Heredity, careful up-bringing, education and travel have combined to invest her with a poise far in advance of her years. Her self-confidence is happily free from the taint of cock-sureness and what sophistication she possesses has been attained without the loss of bloom.

RONNY (as she is usually called) was made to wear clothes well, and she wears her present out-of-door ones superlatively so. Following her, comes RODERICK WHITE, with the fireplace as his objective. There he stands leaning back against a chair, stuffing a pipe with tobacco, and looking a trifle scared.

He is a well set-up, thoroughly nice boy of about twenty-two, with a disarming smile. Although his expression is bright and animated, his countenance appears to be totally without guile. Only RICKY knows the multitude of scrapes that has got him out of. He wears a soft white shirt, flannels, an old jacket and golf shoes.

RONNY (with a rigid back to him)

I think I'll be—going home.

RICKY (amiability itself)

Good idea—if you expect to dress and be back here

in time for dinner. (*A pause.*) Well—you needn't be so snootey about it.

[RONNY *wheels about and faces him.*

RONNY

Ricky—I could kill you for doing that!

RICKY (*puffing on his pipe*)

I've been resisting the impulse all summer—and when you turned your head and looked up that way—well—it was just too much for the boy.

RONNY

I don't see how you dared!

RICKY

Oh, come on, Ronny—you can't get away with that. You loved it.

RONNY

Who said I didn't! For months you've had me literally quaking in my boots. Because I knew that if ever you did, I'd—I'd—

RICKY (*bearing in her direction*)

Ronny! Did you know that, too? (*She nods her head, dumbly.*)—And do you now—as much as I do?

RONNY

Hang it—of course I do!—On the fifteenth of October you're going abroad for three years. For the love of Pete, why couldn't you have held out just two weeks more?—Then you'd have gone, and I'd have forgotten you.—And that would have been all there was to it.

RICKY

—In a pig's eye.

RONNY

I tell you it would! And now—after this— (*She flings a magazine from table to sofa.*) Oh—a sweet winter I'll put in, getting over you!

RICKY (*genuinely dismayed*)

Getting *over* me? But I don't want you to do *that*!

RONNY

No—I'll sit around doing basket-work, while you and your little playmates at the Beaux-Arts scamper up and down Paris.

RICKY (*grandly*)

I am going abroad to study architecture—not to go on parties.

RONNY

Show *me* a student on the Left Bank who doesn't study life! Thanks, Rick. By Spring you will be but a memory.

RICKY

But—but Ronny—can't you get it into your silly head that I'm *really* in love with you? I'm—you've—oh damn it—*won't* you marry me?

[RONNY's hand, in a quick gesture, covers his. For one breathless moment their eyes hold them together.]

RONNY

Ricky! (*Then she removes her hand, and shakes her head with conviction.*) Uh-uh. It's awfully nice of

you—but I couldn't wait three years for Santa Claus himself.

RICKY (*moodily*)

A fat lot you love me.

RONNY

That's got nothing to do with it. (*With a trace of embarrassment.*) You—know how it is—with Father and Mother, don't you?

RICKY

Why—they don't hit it off too well, do they?

RONNY

Mother's never said a word to me—but of course she's simply sticking it out till I'm what-they-call "settled." I had it all planned to marry the next person I was honestly fond of. But now you—you poor sap—you've ruined it. I'll have to forget *you* first. It would be such a filthy trick—when I—when there was someone I actually—(*She shudders.*) Oh—I couldn't stand it!

RICKY

I can't imagine being—to anyone but you, really I can't.

RONNY (*softly*)

It would be too delightful, to be—to you.

[*There is a pause.*]

RICKY (*a sudden idea*)

Listen Ronny: there's no reason why we *shouldn't* be—I'll go into Father's factory, instead. Mr. War-

ren said he'd start me at two thousand a year, and if I was any good—

RONNY

But Rick—you've *always* meant to be an architect. I won't have you wash out on it for me.

RICKY

Oh, will you listen?—I'm not washing out on anything. I'll study on the side—and drift into it gradually. I can go to night school—

RONNY

“‘Whom are you?’ said Cyril.”

RICKY

But why not? Other people have. Life shouldn't be all gravy, anyway. After ten years of school and college I feel like a burglar at the prospect of riding Father for three years more. I know I could swing it every bit as well, right here on my own.

RONNY

But that sounds like such a makeshift. And suppose once you got into business you had to stay put?

RICKY

Well, that's no calamity. Father dished painting in order to marry Nancy. And do you suppose he's ever regretted it? Look at them!

RONNY

I know—they're so happy, it's painful. But—

RICKY

Ronny, it's simply that I want *you*—so much more

than anything else, that it's silly even to talk about it.

RONNY

Are you sure you'll keep *on* wanting me more?

RICKY

You're damn right, I will!

RONNY (*thoughtfully*)

There's a trick in it somewhere.

RICKY

Oh you're full of cold tea. Listen: I'll work like the very devil, and next summer we'll be married. What do you say?

RONNY (*after a troubled pause*)

Why—I've no really strong objections.

RICKY (*in embarrassed delight*)

Oh Lord—this is wonderful. . . . (*She rises and faces him. They stand looking at each other, silently. RICKY finally ventures it:*) Dearest—

RONNY

Angel. . . .

RICKY

Darling. . . .

RONNY

Lover. . . .

RICKY (*groping for it*)

Uh—uh—*Precious*.

RONNY (*dramatically*)

My tr-r-r-easure. (*RICKY presents a cheek, but RICKY*

edges away.) Not on your life. (RICKY *intrepidly* kisses her on the cheek. She laughs.) Heavens, Rick—that was terrible!

RICKY

How do you know?

RONNY

I read a book.

[*At which* RICKY takes her in his arms, as if she were made of spun-glass.

RICKY

“To Veronica from Roderick, with love.”
[*He kisses her lightly, but unmistakably.*

RONNY (*softly*)

Better—much better.

RICKY

I’m going to tell Mother!

RONNY (*in consternation*)

She’ll crown me!

RICKY

Rot, my child. She’ll think what a clever lad her son is.

RONNY

I’m scared of her.

RICKY (*pooh-poohing*)

Scared of Nancy?—Why, she’s nothing but a kid.

RONNY

She appalls me. She knows so much.

RICKY

She'll be all for it. Just you see—(*He starts toward the door, but comes back.*) Ronny—honestly—I simply adore you.

RONNY (*with a faint smile*)

Dear—and what do you think I do you—?
[*On this second expedition he reaches the door, and calls upstairs.*]

RICKY

Mother! (*Where can she be?*) Dearest! (*Can she have gone out?*) Oh, Nancy—stick out your neck!

NANCY (*an enchanting voice from above*)

What is it, you simpleton?

RICKY

What do you think?

NANCY

I think it's time you changed for dinner.

RICKY

Ronny and I are engaged. Can you beat it?

NANCY

Wh-a-a-t—?

RICKY

We have plighted our troth. Big news. C'mon down!
(*He returns to RONNY.*) Beautiful—I feel awfully sacred all of a sudden. I tell you what I'll do: I'll go to church with you in the morning.

RONNY

—Check. The Maiden's Prayer.

RICKY

Then I'll take you on for nine fast holes before lunch. I'll give you a stroke a hole—two, on the sixth—and beat the shoes off you!

RONNY

You lie, friend, you won't.

RICKY

—A dollar a hole. Are you on?

RONNY (*scornfully*)

Am I on! For nine dollars I'd—

[NANCY WHITE *appears in the hall doorway, carrying a half-written letter in her hand. She is a young forty, with a slim, girlish figure, lively, humorous brown eyes, dark-brown hair, and a manner as charming as her appearance. Despite her poise, one feels that her age is merely put on—youth dwells in her spirit, and no mere calendar can oust it. RICKY meets her at the door, and they enter together, his arm about her shoulder.*

RICKY (*with a gesture toward RONNY*)

Behold!—My willing slave.

NANCY (*a brave attempt at severity*)

Veronica—is what Roderick tells me true?

RONNY

All but the “slave,” Mrs. White.

[NANCY *looks from one to the other, goes to RONNY, takes her hand, gazes into her eyes for a moment, and then kisses her on the cheek.*

NANCY (*emotionally*)

My dear! (*She brushes away an imaginary tear, and reaches one hand out behind her to RICKY.*) My first-born child!

RICKY (*for RONNY's information*)

Nancy wanted to go on the stage once. She just eats a thing like this.

NANCY (*pointing an imperious finger toward the sofa*)

—Sit down there! (*RICKY obeys, grinning. NANCY designates a place beside him.*) Veronica—(*RONNY sits at his side, a little frightened. NANCY pulls a large chair around, and sits facing them.*) Now, you two precious idiots, we'll talk this over.

RICKY (*to RONNY*)

Isn't she immense?

[*He affects a most solemn expression, and leans forward attentively, resting his chin upon his hand.*]

NANCY

I thought the fact of your living next door to each other for twelve summers would act as an anti-toxin.

RONNY

You could have knocked me over with a feather, Mrs. White.

NANCY

I dare say. But of course it's quite out of the question. You're nothing but children.

RICKY (*shaking his head reprovably*)

Lord, Nancy—that's awfully old stuff.

NANCY (*with some acerbity*)

Roderick—be kind enough to reserve your infantile comments. (RICKY *subsides*. *She leans back with a sigh*.) Nothing but children. It is beautiful, my dears, but quite, quite ridiculous.

RICKY

Pardon the interruption,—but how old were you, when *you* took the Step?

NANCY

That has nothing to do with it!

RICKY (*indulgently*)

I know—but just as a matter of record—

NANCY (*the dignified mother of two children*)

I was—nineteen. But—

RICKY

You mean a couple of weeks past eighteen. What're you, Ronny?

RONNY

I'll be twenty in December. Big girl.

RICKY

Check. And how about Dad?

NANCY

He was a great deal older than you are!

RICKY

Your memory's failing! He had me just four months.

NANCY (*ironically*)

I don't want to be sordid—but what *do* you expect to live on?

RICKY

Query: What did *you* live on, Darling?

NANCY

Why—I had a little of my own, and your Father worked.

RICKY (*with a gesture*)

It's a perfect equation!

RONNY

I've about two thousand a year from Aunt Isabel's estate and Father's promised me a house.

NANCY (*to RICKY*)

And may I ask what you intend doing about your architecture?

RONNY (*leaning forward*)

You and me both, Mrs. White—

RICKY

Quiet, Child—let me manage this. I'm going like a breeze. (*To NANCY.*) Well, you see, I'm going to pass that up, and—

NANCY (*really troubled*)

But—

RICKY

Oh—maybe not for good. Maybe, bye and bye, when we get on our feet—

NANCY

“Bye and bye!” Somehow, that sounds vaguely reminiscent to me. Unless you do it now, you'll never

do it!—That's certain as death and hay-fever, my dear.

RICKY

Well, what if I don't? I mean, you told me that Father wanted to paint, or something—but you and he were married at twenty-one and eighteen respectively, and he went into business, and stayed there. What I mean is, it seems to me that you two have made a pretty good go of it.

NANCY (*proudly*)

We have made an uncommonly good go of it. But—(*She scrutinizes RICKY's ankles in despair.*) Oh—your socks again! Ronny—can't *you* make him wear garters?

RONNY

Isn't it awful?—Slippety-slop.

NANCY

What you find attractive in him, I'm sure I can't see.—I was saying . . . ? Ah yes—my reminiscences—(*She hesitates. Then to RONNY.*) Of course, you look very charming as you are. But we dine at eight o'clock.

[RONNY *rises and moves toward the hall.*]

RONNY

Then I'd better shove off.

NANCY (*just as she is about to go out*)

Oh—uh—Veronica—

RONNY (*turning*)

Yes?

NANCY

Do you think you really love my Ricky?

[*A short pause. RONNY looks straight at NANCY.*

RONNY (*simply*)

I've never given a happy hang for anyone else. I'd simply lie down and die for him.

[*RICKY rises and makes for her, but a sweep of NANCY's arm intercepts him.*

NANCY

—Eight o'clock. And—I think it will be all right—somehow—

RONNY

Oh—you *are* a dear. . . .

RICKY (*calling after her*)

Make it earlier, if you can. The president of Father's Company's coming, and we may rate a cocktail!

RONNY (*a voice from the hall*)

Right-o!

[*NANCY goes to the desk, with her unfinished letter.*

NANCY

I'm writing to your sister. Your love . . . ?

RICKY

Sure. But don't say anything about Ronny and I—

NANCY (*automatically*)

“—about Ronny and *me*.”

RICKY (*grammar is an affectation*)

—about Ronny and I. You know Jean—she'd have it all over the school in six minutes.

NANCY

Now I want to talk to you sensibly.

RICKY

Shoot, Darling—

[NANCY opens a drawer of the desk. It is filled to overflowing with small pieces of paper. Two fall upon the floor. RICKY picks them up and looks at them.]

NANCY

You see these?

RICKY

Sketches!—Father's . . . ?

NANCY

Yes. Before I give Robert his clothes to press, I always go through the pockets. Not more than twenty times in twenty years have I failed to find one or two of these, all nicely folded up and tucked away. He does murals, too. That's why the wall beside the telephone is repapered so often. (*Looking at sketches, which RICKY gives her.*) Charming, aren't they . . . ?

[*She puts them back and closes the drawer. Taking RICKY's arm, they return together to the sofa.*]

RICKY

But what's his foolishness got to do with my—?

NANCY

There's something very sad in that folly, Rick. It's like the beating of clipped wings—longing for flight. . . .

[RICKY stares at her.]

RICKY (*disgustedly*)

Oh—if you're going to get deep on me—

NANCY

You've no idea how deep it goes. . . . (*She studies his face for a moment and then continues, matter-of-factly.*) Now Ronny is a sweet, lovable girl. And if the truth must be known, I heartily approve of early marriages, when—

[RICKY *leans over and pecks her cheek.*

RICKY

Great!

NANCY

Behave yourself, and listen to me!—*When* they are possible without too great sacrifices. Ricky—from the time you began to play with blocks, you've wanted to study architecture. Don't you still?

RICKY

Why of course I do. But I can't have both—and I want Ronny more.

NANCY

We might arrange—

RICKY

—To carry the two of us?—That's like you, Dear—but no thanks. When I'm married, I've got to be on my own. Maybe I'm in the same place Father was. Well—I know what I want most, just the way he did. It's a simple question of values. . . .

NANCY

Your values may shift a little, later on.

RICKY (*by way of refutation*)

Did Father's?

NANCY

—And when you're forty or so, you may look on love as a kind of captivating robber—who chatted so sweetly, as he plucked your destiny out of your pocket. . . .

RICKY

There you go again! Ask Dad—he knows!

[*He looks toward the hall, through which someone is coming to the accompaniment of a very gay whistle.*]

NANCY (*rapidly*)

—You may suddenly feel choked-off—thwarted—in the one really big thing you could have done. Then—though you love her dearly—you'll resent Ronny. You'll try not to let her see. If she loves you, she can't avoid it.—Or even you yourself may not know quite what's wrong. You may simply find, all at once, that you are very empty, very unhappy. . . .

RICKY

But Nancy—look how happy Father is!

[*The whistle draws closer.*]

NANCY

You can't tell much by a whistle, son.

[*MAITLAND WHITE comes in. He is forty-three, about five feet ten, and in the pink of trim. He is not particularly handsome, but with a face and smile that win you immediately. To look at him you might think him*]

any one of a number of things. You guess that it is business, and you know that he is successful. His hands—long, slender and restless—and a kind of boyish quality in him are all that betray the artist. He wears a dinner-coat, and is unwrapping a large, flat package as he enters. He places it upon the Center table, and carelessly drops the paper to the floor.

MAITLAND (to NANCY)

Do come here and see this Watteau print I've got for your room—

[He sets it up against some books, and stands off to look at it, continuing his low whistling. NANCY goes to his side, picking up the paper en route, and slips her arm through his.]

NANCY

Maitland—you lamb—it's too enchanting!

MAITLAND

—You know, the way that man combines grace and abandon is beyond me. I wish I—

RICKY

Father—I'm going to marry Ronny Duane—

MAITLAND (*quite unimpressed by this momentous announcement*)

You see, it's at once a bubble, and a monument. This lady, with her head turned, so—you know, my dear—I think she's extraordinarily like you.

NANCY

Imbecile!—Look at her nose.

[MAITLAND *does so, then lifts NANCY's chin and studies her face for a moment.*

MAITLAND

I could fix that with one line.

[*Being so accessible, he kisses her. NANCY steals a furtive look at RICKY, who does not attempt to conceal his disgust.*

RICKY

Aw—cut it out!—I say, Father, that I'm going to—

MAITLAND

—It's called "The Embarkation for Cythera"—hangs in the Louvre. (*He chuckles reminiscently.*)—Remember that night the summer before we were married—when *we* embarked for Greenwich in the sail-boat from Long Island?—And got becalmed half way across? Lord! I'll never forget your Mother's face, as we tip-toed in at five-thirty!

RICKY (*compassionately*)

Poor Dad—middle-age at last.

MAITLAND

What *is* that infant babbling about?

RICKY

It's the first time I've ever heard you brag of what a cut-up you were as a lad. Unmistakably, Dad,—you're *done*.

MAITLAND

Done, eh—? Who beat you 6-love, 6-3, 6-2 this morning?

RICKY

Oh—you're *fit* enough. It's the mind that goes first.

MAITLAND (*scornfully*)

Middle age!

[*Nonetheless, he does look a little annoyed about it.*]

RICKY

I don't want to bore you—but I was breaking the news of my approaching nuptials with one Veronica Duane.

MAITLAND

—And didn't I felicitate you? How careless. Congratulations, my boy—and upon the inheritance, too.

RICKY

The—what . . . ?

MAITLAND (*with a gesture*)

The—er—legacy. . . .

RICKY

What do you mean?

MAITLAND

Why—er—haven't you come into a large fortune, as well?

RICKY

I haven't been advised of the fact.

MAITLAND

Then how do you expect to marry Ronny?

RICKY

She's got her own running-expenses, and I'm going to work.

MAITLAND

I sincerely trust that eventually you will.

RICKY

I want to begin right away. I'm not going abroad, Father.

[MAITLAND looks at NANCY for an explanation. She makes a helpless gesture, as if to say, "I've done all I can." A pause. MAITLAND is dumbfounded. He turns to RICKY, drops his bantering air, and speaks kindly and sympathetically.]

MAITLAND

Look here, young fellow, this is a little confusing. Would you mind telling me more about it?

RICKY

Why—there isn't a great deal to tell, sir. It's just that we're—very much in love, and want to be married as soon as we possibly can. I figure that if I go to work now, by Spring everything will be rosy.

MAITLAND

What do you plan to do?

RICKY

—The same as you—the Warren Company.—Caught you, sir—you thought I'd say "sell bonds."

MAITLAND

And your architecture goes by the boards, eh?

RICKY

Why should it? I can study evenings, and Sundays, and finally—(At this patent absurdity, MAITLAND laughs. RICKY is injured.) Well—I can.

MAITLAND (*gravely*)

Ricky—our method of upbringing for you and Jean has allowed room for very few “thou-shalt-nots.” I’m not going to start ordering you about now, but there are a few things, that—as an older man—I want to remind you of—

[NANCY *proceeds to examine the Watteau print more closely.*]

RICKY

Yes, Father.

MAITLAND

I have my own eyes, and the word of your masters at school and college, to tell me that you have a real gift for building-design. You love the work, and you’re unusually well-suited to it. You need technique, and a background—and you need them badly. Three years at the Beaux-Arts will give you the best there are.

RICKY

But Ronny—

MAITLAND (*a little exasperated*)

If Ronny won’t wait for you, there’ll be another girl just as charming, later on. (NANCY *puts down the picture and looks at them.*) I want to tell you, son, that the most important thing in a man’s life is his work—particularly when he has an equipment such as yours. It’s hard to get going; for awhile you need absolute independence—freedom to think only “I, I, I, I and my work”—After marriage that’s no longer

possible. From then on it's "you and I"—with the "you" first, every time. "You and I"—

RICKY

That's only polite.

MAITLAND (*swiftly*)

I'm not speaking idly!—And don't underestimate, either, the suffering a flouted destiny can bring you. There's a course you feel cut out to take—step off it now, and you'll regret it as long as you live.

[NANCY *aimlessly picks up a magazine.*

RICKY

But—I simply can't give up Ronny—

[MAITLAND *stares at him, and then rises abruptly from his chair.*

MAITLAND (*brutally*)

In my opinion, any man who sacrifices his career for the sake of a girl hasn't the backbone of—a cup-custard. (NANCY's *head drops a little, over her magazine. RICKY glances at her apprehensively.*)—And any girl selfish enough to permit—

RICKY

Look here, sir—isn't this a bit rough on Mother?

MAITLAND

Rough on—? What do you mean . . . ?

NANCY (*very quietly*)

Don't be silly, Ricky.

[MAITLAND *looks from one to the other.*

MAITLAND

But . . . ?

NANCY

I must go and dress. (*To RICKY.*) You'd better come too.

[*She starts to move toward the hall.*]

MAITLAND

Just a moment, dear—(*Again to RICKY:*) It's sheer nonsense to think you can manage two occupations—One or the other must go. You—

RICKY

I'm afraid it's no use, Father. I've thought it all out, and my mind's made up.

[*MAITLAND shakes his head sadly—pityingly, perhaps. Before NANCY reaches the door, ETTA, in maid's costume, enters. The kindest of all laws—that of compensations—has endowed her with lustrous hair, perfect coloring, a charming figure, and eyes to which the Blue Grot is a dirty gray. Who cares at what age the psychological tests will place her?*]

ETTA

Mr. Warren has arrived.

[*And here is G. T. WARREN himself. He is about fifty-five, and partially bald—a short, plump, gusty little man, with a ready smile. He has the conceit of most self-made men, but in his case it is made amusing by his naïveté. He is, in the business vernacular, always “on his toes,” and literally exudes prosperity and good nature. He speaks rapidly, and with con-*]

viction. NANCY, MAITLAND and RICKY rise to greet him.

MAITLAND

“—and seizing his golf-clubs, and the latest Murder Mystery, our Captain of Industry determined to relax.”

WARREN (*briskly, as always*)

Hello, White! Relax, is the word. I never felt stiffer. (*Taking NANCY's hand, and beaming upon her.*) And how's the little woman?

NANCY

Growing up, Mr. Warren. It's delightful, having you here. I'd concluded you thought rest only for the dead. (*To ETTA.*) Have Mr. Warren's chauffeur take his car to the garage. He will stay in William's quarters. (*To WARREN.*) Do sit down. Would you like a pick-me-up?

WARREN (*ETTA is in the corner of his eye*)

I'll wait—. What a pretty girl!

[*The pretty one goes out.*]

NANCY

Better than that, she's one of the few mortals who can get on with my old Katie. She came as a temporary, but I think I'll perpetuate her.

[*WARREN advances deeper into the room, mopping his brow and adjusting his cuffs.*]

WARREN

Miserable trip, coming up. I brought that advertising man Davis, as far as White Plains with me. He talked saturated-markets and customer-resistance till

I had to ask him if he handled a hot-air furnace account!

[At which he chuckles. And if you were one of his clerks, you may be certain you would roar with laughter. But—

NANCY (*with a grimace to MAITLAND*)

Mr. Warren says the quaintest things.

WARREN

Well—as I told that reporter fellow who interviewed me last week—“Smile through to success”—that’s been my motto ever since I was a kid. (*To RICKY.*) Hello, son—all through with college?

RICKY

—The youngest living graduate.

WARREN

I must mind my who’s and whom’s. Let’s see—it was Harvard, wasn’t it?

RICKY (*a gentle reproof*)

Mr. Warren—*please—*

WARREN

My mistake! Well—I got *my* education at the University of Hard Knocks, and—

RICKY (*an end to these wall-mottoes!*)

“—and began business without a nickel in my pocket and look at me now!”

[WARREN stares at him for a moment and then laughs.

WARREN

White—this is a fresh youngster of yours, but I like

his spirit. I can't stand men who're afraid of me.

RICKY

You know—I like you, too. You look exactly like our old baseball trainer. If you don't mind, I think I'll come and work for you. I won't be like this in the office. At toil, I'll be very reserved. But *here*—? Well—both good fellows, wot?

WARREN (*I can be a hale fellow, as well met as any*)

Both good fellows! When can you start?

RICKY

A week from Monday. Are you on?

WARREN

It suits me. Have you given up your other plans?

MAITLAND (*quickly*)

I don't think he's quite decided, G. T.

NANCY

He's not himself today, Mr. Warren.

RICKY (*scowling at them*)

As a matter of fact, sir, they're full of red ants. I have *quite* decided, and I've never been more myself.

WARREN

He couldn't do better than to come with us. This is an age of business. (*He picks up the Watteau print and glances at it.*) H'm—pretty. . . . (*Replaces it and turns again to RICKY.*) I'll put you through the production end in six months, then the sales depart-

ment. Then the—you see, we're entirely departmentalized. (*He takes pencil and paper from his pocket, and sits beside RICKY.*) Look here. It's arranged like this: Here's the top: "G. T. Warren"—

RICKY

Himself!

WARREN

Then the Vice-President—you know old Lawson. Then your father. Beneath us, come the—
[*Then they all talk together. But unless you have an inordinate interest in business, you would better listen to NANCY and MAITLAND.*]

MAITLAND (*to NANCY*)

I nearly forgot. Who do you think is staying with the Carharts?

[*WARREN is saying, "I'll draw it like a line of descent, showing the complete unit."* RICKY, for want of something better, replies, "*—The Warren genealogy, h'm?*"]

NANCY

—Someone swanky.—Who?

MAITLAND

Geoff Nichols. He just telephoned me.—He got back from China last week.

NANCY (*puzzled*)

Nichols . . . ?

[*WARREN says, "—Might call it that. First—Administration; then Sales; next—Distribution—with*

that little arrow indicating our foreign business"—at which RICKY appreciatively murmurs, "Europe too!"

MAITLAND

You remember Geoffrey—he was one of our ushers.

NANCY

The writer person!

MAITLAND

Of course.—I haven't laid eyes on him for years. He's going to stop in for a moment before dinner. [WARREN *has informed RICKY that "We cover the entire world" and gone on to explain: "Then Production—then finally the Purchasing Department—raw materials. There—you have it all—a ten-million-dollar business. Simple, isn't it?"*

NANCY

Must we talk literature to him?

MAITLAND (*laughing*)

Heavens—no!

[RICKY, *having told his future employer that "It depends on what you call simple," brings the competitive conversation to a conclusion.*

RICKY

You can count on young Roderick for the literary stuff. I've just gone another two inches on my Five-Foot-Shelf of Books.

WARREN (*giving RICKY the diagram*)

I'll leave this with you. And if you're half the man your father is—

RICKY (*laconically*)

Oh—I'll draw circles around Dad.

NANCY

Would you like to go to your room, Mr. Warren?
—The gray room, Ricky. And remember—a *stiff* shirt!

RICKY

What! Is the dear Duchess coming? (*To Warren.*)
The gray room's usually reserved for ambassadors and bishops, sir, but—(*With a deprecating gesture.*)—you see how you stand with us.
[WARREN *laughs, and puts his hand on RICKY's shoulder, preparatory to going out.*

WARREN (*to MAITLAND*)

White, you've been looking completely worn out.
Why not pack up and forget business for a month or two?

MAITLAND

The Company would crack to pieces!

RICKY

Not with you and me there, would it, Chief?

WARREN

No indeed! We've got youth on our side. It's your poor old father, who's aging so fast. (*He slips his arm through RICKY's as they cross Left.*)—Both good fellows, eh?

RICKY (*solemnly*)

The best there are! (*They go out, and their voices*

die away on the favorite theme:) You know—I think I'm going to like business.

WARREN

We *need* young blood. I've always said—

MAITLAND (*a little annoyed*)

That amazing child!

NANCY

He's cleverer than you think. G. T. was pleased as Punch. (MAITLAND *seats himself in a chair.*) Oh—I've gone flat, from standing so long. (*She sinks down on the arm of MAITLAND's chair.*) Why don't you make me go up and dress?

MAITLAND

Go up and dress!

NANCY

I won't!

MAITLAND

You're an obstinate baggage.

NANCY

I am the wife of your bosom, and you adore me. —Matey—you're a grand old thing—do you know it?

MAITLAND

I do.

NANCY

—But it doesn't become you to admit it—(*A slight pause.*) I believe I'm in love with you.

MAITLAND (*impressively*)

It's my fatal fascination. (*Suddenly troubled.*)
Nancy—have I been looking done in, lately—or done
up—or done anyway?

NANCY

Why—*no!* (*She turns his head around and scrutinizes his face.*)—A little tired, perhaps. (*She finds a gray hair, and with great care proceeds to separate it from its fellows.*) Here's another gray one. Out you come, false prophet! (*MAITLAND submits to the operation. The offending member is held up for his inspection.*) *Voila*—As the driven snow.
[*MAITLAND laughs, a little nervously.*]

MAITLAND

Are there any other signs?

NANCY

Of what?

MAITLAND

Senility.

NANCY

None but the fact that you are being unusually
childish.

MAITLAND

Well—G. T. and the infant both spoke of it.

NANCY

Of what?

MAITLAND

My premature decline.

NANCY (*lovingly*)

Matey—you idiot!

MAITLAND

Well, after all—here I am, forty odd—life's half over. . . .

NANCY

I never heard such nonsense! You're in the very prime of life.

MAITLAND (*with a grimace*)

"Prime"—wretched word. Soon I'll be "spry."—What a week it's been! I went to the mat with G. T. again yesterday. He can't seem to get it into his head that if we're to keep up our expansion, we've got to advertise in a big way—like Colgate's.

NANCY

Of course we have—

MAITLAND

I've been at him for years. Our appropriation is fifty thousand, where it ought to be five hundred. And he says he won't increase it a nickel until he finds a way to advertise the entire line as a unit.—Which is simple rot.

NANCY

He's a tight-fisted old fool.

MAITLAND

No he's not. He's merely obtuse.

NANCY

You put things so beautifully, my dear.

MAITLAND

Honestly, Nancy—I get so fed-up at times, I could throw over the whole works.

NANCY (*with genuine sympathy*)

Poor lamb. Seriously—what about a holiday? It's years since we've been abroad.

MAITLAND

The market's shot to pieces. We can't afford it—not if we're to send Ricky.

NANCY

But—you know—he's not going.

MAITLAND

You think he's actually in earnest about the factory?

NANCY

I'm almost certain he is. But perhaps—on the side—he can—

MAITLAND

“On the side”!—Heaven save him from it! His one hope for peace is to forget it entirely—(*Shaking his head.*) Oh—it's criminal for that boy to give up his career.

[*A slight pause.*]

NANCY

Was it—criminal—for *you* to, Maitland?

[*Another pause. Then MAITLAND laughs easily.*]

MAITLAND

So *that's* what he meant! (*Reassuringly.*) It's quite different with us—quite.

NANCY

Is it?

MAITLAND (*with spirit*)

Of course!

NANCY (*dubiously*)

Well—I'm glad to know *that*. (*From the hall is heard a man's voice saying, "Well—if people will leave their doors open they can expect other people to walk in without ringing—so here I am!"*) I wonder if that's—

[*And GEOFFREY NICHOLS it is. He is MAITLAND's age, taller, very slight and with a most engaging manner. In comparison with the other successful literary men of your acquaintance, his affectations are very few.*

MAITLAND

Geoff! Lord—this is fine!

NICHOLS (*taking his hand delightedly*)

Matey—you pig! If you don't look prosperous! And this is—Mrs. Matey—(*Crooking a speculative finger at NANCY.*) Your name is—don't tell me, now—your name is—Nancy! And you were the prettiest bride ever I saw. What a wedding! I was terribly sorry about that punch-bowl—I should have known that I couldn't balance it on my nose. You know, you seem *two* years older, instead of—(*He covers his eyes with his hands, in mock dismay.*) Oh—I mustn't say it—I can feel my shroud as I do. . . .

NANCY

What a charming man.

NICHOLS (*to MAITLAND*)

I begged you not to marry. I eat my words. I behold the ideal wife.

NANCY

Can nothing induce you to stay and dine?

NICHOLS

It would be writing my doom with the Carharts. I'm with them.

NANCY

Then do come to us for next week-end.

NICHOLS

I'm so sorry. I sail Wednesday on the *Majestic*.

NANCY

You're impossible.

NICHOLS

Oh no!—Let's say Monday—join me in town for dinner and the theater—I'll get seats for a show.

NANCY (*to MAITLAND*)

Are you free?

MAITLAND

Monday? Why yes.

NANCY (*to NICHOLS*)

Then we accept.—Now I simply must dress for dinner. You want to talk, anyway. Don't go till I come down, will you?

[NICHOLS bows, and with her most gracious smile NANCY goes out. MAITLAND offers NICHOLS a cigarette, which he accepts.]

NICHOLS

Well—"home is the sailor, home from the sea"—and all that jolly rot.

MAITLAND

Geoff—it's been twenty years at least.

NICHOLS

I demand a recount!

MAITLAND

I last broke bread with you in the Spring of '99. . . .

NICHOLS

My Victorian Memoirs.
[*They seat themselves.*]

MAITLAND

Where *have* you been?

NICHOLS

Everywhere! I'm a veritable flea for travel. London is my old lady—Paris, my mistress—and Rome—well, I don't know *what* she is. (MAITLAND *laughs, a little enviously, and begins sketching, absently, on the back of a magazine.*)—And what have the long years held for you, as they say?

MAITLAND

Oh—here and New York—business as usual.

NICHOLS

What different lives we've had.

MAITLAND

Haven't we?

NICHOLS (*reflectively*)

—And yet at twenty we were much the same. Twenty—the incendiary age, Matey.—I was going to set the world on fire with my novels—your match was a paint-brush.

MAITLAND

And I gave up my painting to marry Nancy Lyon. . . .

NICHOLS

—While I forsook sweet Kitty Nash, to wed with an ink-pot! A pair of jilts, we two! Well—what do you think of *your* bargain?

MAITLAND

I've come out the winner, Geoff.

NICHOLS

And so have I!

MAITLAND

Impossible!—I've a happy home—sufficient leisure—a regular income—two fine, spoiled children—and a wife that's a simple miracle. Trump them, if you can!

NICHOLS (*gaily, with the gesture of laying cards on the table, one by one*)

The world's my home—every hour of my time is my own—I'll match my income with yours any day!—And as for your last three items, I say what Bacon said: "A man with wife and children has given hostages to Fortune!"

MAITLAND

But old lady Fortune has done me rather well.

NICHOLS

Oh—she has her favorite slaves. But freedom's the thing! As Shaw said to me one day last April—hang it—what *was* it he said?—At any rate, it was simply convulsing.

MAITLAND

But how on earth have you done any work?

NICHOLS

Work? Why, every new experience is material. Wherever I go, my typewriter follows. No worries, no responsibilities—just *life*—the one life I have—spiced and succulent.

MAITLAND

While I—day after day—“Nine to five—nine to five.”

NICHOLS

Those words are the business man's epitaph.

MAITLAND (*determined to be sprightly*)

Oh—a man has his moments. Even a business man.
[NICHOLS *glances at* MAITLAND's *sketch*.]

NICHOLS

But as I remember, you showed amazing promise. I've known painters with wives—with children, even. Why didn't you go on with it?
[MAITLAND *returns the magazine to the table, and pockets the pencil*.]

MAITLAND

Well, you see, Nancy and I married ridiculously young—neither of us rich, but both accustomed to a certain standard of living.—A regular income became pretty much of a necessity.

NICHOLS

—And you put it off. Tsch—what a shame—

MAITLAND (*reluctantly*)

Perhaps—I don't know. Sometimes—when I think that I haven't yet done the thing I wanted to do—my forty-three years do seem rather futile and mis-spent. It's been particularly salty today. My boy Roderick, for whom I've expected great things—(*He shifts uneasily in his chair.*) Oh, well—it's the old story over again: Expediency's heel, on the neck of inclination.

NICHOLS

But some phases of your life must be very interesting. Now business is not without its—

MAITLAND

Geoff, business is a dump for dreams. I believe every fourth man in it has something shut down in him. You can see it in their faces. Some of them wanted to paint, like me—some to write, to sing—to be doctors, lawyers—God bless me, even preachers! But expediency ordered it otherwise. And now most of them will die in the traces, poor devils . . . die of market-reports—Babsonitis—hardening of the soul—

NICHOLS

Ah yes—as someone says, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation.”

MAITLAND (*softly*)

“Quiet desperation.” (*He rises, sharply.*) By God—here’s one who’s fed-up with it! I’ve a good mind to chuck business *now*—and go to painting!

[NICHOLS *looks somewhat alarmed; this is being taken too literally.*

NICHOLS

—You’re not serious?

MAITLAND

So serious, that the turn of a hair would decide it.

NICHOLS (*rising after a helpless pause*)

You must realize that the—er—artistic life—has its *disadvantages*, too. One’s laurels are so insecure. Popularity is such a fickle thing . . .

MAITLAND

Who said anything about popularity?

NICHOLS (*shrugging*)

One might as well live, as not.

MAITLAND

If you do good work, you make quite enough.

NICHOLS

But my income isn’t half what it’s reputed to be! And the irregular hours! Lord, Matey—my nerves are chaos.

MAITLAND

Mine are paralyzed.

NICHOLS

—And look at me!—My age—and still flitting about from pillar to post like a gouty bumblebee . . .

MAITLAND

In motion, at any rate. I never leave the ground.
[NICHOLS, *with a profound sigh, sinks into a comfortable chair.*

NICHOLS

What I wouldn't give for a home like this—and children—and a wife like your Nancy!

MAITLAND

You have your art . . .

NICHOLS

She's not so sweet as Kitty Nash!—And if it weren't for her and her importunities, I might have Kitty now—and a home that *is* a home.

MAITLAND

You've compensations. . . .

NICHOLS

No, Maitland. I suppose I should have, if I could honestly feel that art—true art—was the gainer for my sacrifice. But a popular novelist! Oh—don't you suppose *I* know what my stuff is worth? (*He continues with deep feeling:*) I give you my word—there's no such hell on earth as that of the man who knows himself doomed to mediocrity in the work he loves—whatever it may be. You love painting—you

think you could paint great pictures.—Well—go on thinking—but don't try it. No! No!—You've done well in business—be wise, and stick to it.

MAITLAND

I am stuck.

NICHOLS

What are you anyway?

MAITLAND

Why—er—I'm a manufacturer . . .

NICHOLS

What do you make?

MAITLAND (*this is painful*)

Oh—er—various things. . . .

NICHOLS

But what's the—*pièce de résistance*, so to speak?

MAITLAND (*very painful indeed*)

Well—er—I suppose one would say—er—*soap*. . . .

NICHOLS

Soap! Lord!—You can get your *teeth* into soap!

MAITLAND (*cynically*)

You can into *ours*. It proclaims itself made of only the purest edible fats.

NICHOLS

Believe me, I envy you—

MAITLAND

But you've no idea of the—*hunger* I have, to be painting.

NICHOLS

Can't you find time to daub a bit on the side?

MAITLAND

Business life has no side. It's one dimension. Try it and see. Ah—if only I could get free of it—altogether free of it, for awhile. To feel a brush in my hand again—to see a picture grow under my eyes—to create—good God!—something other than a cake of soap.

NICHOLS

But if it's *good* soap . . .

MAITLAND (*interrupting*)

—But this house—and the apartment in town—and the servants—and the children to educate! Of course it's impossible—plainly impossible.

NICHOLS

And lucky for you that it is. Forget it, man, forget it—

MAITLAND

I wish to heaven I could!

[NANCY enters, in evening-dress. They rise.]

NICHOLS (*glancing at his watch*)

I'd no idea it was so late. (*Going to the door, followed by MAITLAND.*) I shall look forward to Monday night. Shall we say the St. Regis, at 7:30?

NANCY

We'll be there!

NICHOLS

Till Monday, then.

[*He and MAITLAND go out. NANCY moves toward the desk, humming—and stops halfway with a perplexed frown. She continues to the desk, again humming, seats herself and begins to finish the letter. MAITLAND reënters, and, going to the table, stands there with his fingers resting upon it, staring down at the Watteau print, rapt in thought. NANCY speaks, without turning.*)]—Did you enjoy your talk?

MAITLAND (*absently*)

What—?—Oh—er—yes—very much (*His voice trails off.*)—very much. (*A pause.*)—What a fascinating time Nichols has had of it!

NANCY (*a few more lines, and Jean's letter will be finished*)

M-m-m—I must read something of his. . . .

MAITLAND (*half to himself*)

“Hostages to Fortune.” (*A pause; lower:*) “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation.”

NANCY

What, dear . . . ?

[*MAITLAND looks a little startled.*]

MAITLAND

I said, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation.”

[*NANCY, puzzled, glances over her shoulder at him, then turns again, reflectively biting the end of her pen, then cheerfully continues her writing.*]

NANCY

Well—so long as they're quiet about it—let's—let

them go right ahead—shall we . . . ? (MAITLAND, deep in thought, does not answer. NANCY seals the note, addresses it, stamps it with a bang, and goes to him. She puts her hands upon his shoulders, and faces him about.) Matey—you sweet old thing—what is the matter?

MAITLAND (*with an attempt at a smile*)

Oh—nothing.

[*He cups her elbows in the palms of his hands for an instant and then leaves her.*]

NANCY (*after a thoughtful pause*)

Dear—it seems to me that you’ve about everything that a person could desire. We’ve—most of the good things of life—health—position—enough money—a happy family. (*She hesitates.*)—And we’ve—each other. Nor is ours the tame, settled love most people have at forty. Some blessed good fortune has kept the keen edge on it. I love my children—but compared to you—oh, Matey! (*A little laugh.*) I imagine—there’s more woman in me, than mother. . . . (*A pause; MAITLAND says nothing. NANCY is chilled.*)—You have been unusually successful in your work. What more could any man ask—than you have . . . ?

MAITLAND (*impatiently, but with intense suffering*)

Nancy—Nancy—what do you know about it!

[NANCY catches her breath sharply, holds it a moment, and then lets it go.]

NANCY

I suppose—you know—it—just about knocks the heart out of me, to hear you say that. (*She waits*

for a response. None comes.) Oh—this *can't* be you and I! (*A moment's silence. She regains her composure and continues in a matter-of-fact voice.*) Maitland—there's something I want you to do.

MAITLAND

What is it?

NANCY

Leave business for a year. Get leave of absence, if possible. Otherwise, resign.

MAITLAND (*affecting to be puzzled*)

But—my dear *why*?

NANCY (*with an impatient gesture*)

Oh—*please!* Do you think I've had all these years with you—to be fooled by pretense now? I've known for a *long* time that you weren't happy—and why you weren't. But I've *not* known—quite how much it meant to you. I want you to devote the year to painting.

MAITLAND (*indulgently*)

It's a nice idea, Nancy, but—

[*His gesture includes the house, the motor-cars, the servants.*]

NANCY (*rapidly*)

We'll give up the apartment. We'll stay out here over the winter. One car—and run it ourselves. We'll keep Katie and Etta—and let the others go. I'll do the upstairs myself. Ricky will be in business—no longer an expense. My own income will be enough to dress Jean and pay her school bills.

MAITLAND

You know how little I have outside of my salary?

NANCY

Little—but plenty for us. We'll economize in everything—(*She looks at the three lighted lamps with a smile.*)—We'll—begin with the electric lights. The front attic can be made into a studio.

MAITLAND

People would think I'd lost my mind.

NANCY (*scornfully*)

People!

MAITLAND

I suppose they wouldn't have to know. But G. T.—

NANCY (*quickly*)

Tell him it's—personal research work.

MAITLAND

—And if the research finds nothing?

NANCY

Maitland—if you don't still think the bird in the bush worth any two in the hand, you might as well die.

MAITLAND (*smiling*)

That's very deft, indeed. But I'm *not* going to be bullied into—

NANCY

Nobody's bullying you.

MAITLAND

Well—we'll think it over. Perhaps—bye-and-bye. . . .

NANCY

We'll do nothing of the sort. You must tell G. T. tonight. How long would it take you to wind up your affairs?

MAITLAND

Why, I always keep them pretty well arranged, so that if anything should happen to me—

NANCY

Splendid! Something *has* happened to you: You've decided to start painting the first of the month.

MAITLAND (*after a thoughtful pause*)

No. It's no use—the whole thing's too absurd.

NANCY

This isn't a whim. If you won't do it for your own happiness, perhaps you will for mine.

[MAITLAND *glances at her quickly.*

MAITLAND (*in spite of himself*)

By heaven, Nancy—you *are* a brick!

NANCY (*enigmatically*)

Maybe I'm not a brick at all. Maybe I'm—just fighting for something I thought I had.

MAITLAND (*scoffing*)

Thought you had!

NANCY

At any rate, you've got to do it. . . .

[*This should settle it.*]

MAITLAND (*but it doesn't*)

No, Nancy, *no*.—Think of the practical side—the expense.

NANCY

I did. My plans for economy quite astonished me!

MAITLAND

They might apply out here. Not in town.

NANCY

Town?

MAITLAND (*lamely*)

I'd—uh—I'd naturally do portraits, wouldn't I?—
And that necessitates models, doesn't it?

NANCY

Well?

MAITLAND

Well—the countryside's not precisely dotted with them. (NANCY *amusedly shakes her head over him.*)
—And that's only one objection.

NANCY

I've seldom heard a lamer one. If I can get servants to come to the country, why can't you get models?

MAITLAND

You don't realize that—

[NANCY *presses a button in the wall.*]

NANCY

Maitland, I realize that the thing of main importance is for you to begin your painting at once.

MAITLAND

I never saw such a devil for speed.

NANCY

Give yourself time to think up objections, and you won't start at all. If I can manage with a temporary maid, you can with a temporary model.

MAITLAND

Some pinched, painted relic, I suppose—

NANCY

Not at all.

[ETTA *enters, the apotheosis of young, fresh beauty.*

MAITLAND

It's impossible, Nancy. It's—

ETTA

You rang?

NANCY

Yes.—Etta—I—er—I presume you never posed as a model?

[ETTA's *mouth opens in astonishment. She looks from one to the other.*

ETTA

Why, *Ma'am!* Of course I didn't! Who said that I—?

NANCY

There, Etta—no one. I merely—

ETTA (*Is a pretty girl never safe from scandal?*)

Didn't I not bring the best of references? Wasn't I not three years in my last place?—And two in the—a *model*! Why I—

[MAITLAND *is studying her, crimson-lake in his eye.*

NANCY

You know—a model may be a model, and still be—er—*model*.

ETTA (*desperately*)

But Mrs. White—really—I tell you that—

NANCY

Yes—I comprehend. You have never been a model—never in the *slightest* degree. Now, what I am attempting to tell you, is that Mr. White expects to spend the next year painting—in the attic—(ETTA *regards MAITLAND as if he had gone insane. He is most uncomfortable under her scrutiny.*)—which will be made over into a studio. (*To MAITLAND.*) Do you think Etta would serve your purpose?

MAITLAND (*off his guard*)

Why, you know—it's quite extraordinary—(*Then, with attempted nonchalance.*) Oh—I dare say she might do to start with.

NANCY (*to ETTA*)

If you will consent to remain here in the country with us this winter, and pose for a few hours each day—

ETTA (*gently*)

I am sorry, Ma'am—

NANCY

Just a moment!—I shall increase your wages, and help you with your work.

ETTA (*firmly*)

No, Ma'am—I could not consider it. Not for all the money in the world.

NANCY (*frankly puzzled*)

But—I don't understand. Would you mind telling us why? (ETTA *hesitates, peering at MAITLAND.*)—You may be quite frank.

ETTA

Well—I do not like to say nothing, but the man of the house in the third last place I was in, made advances that was—advances that *were*—most unwelcome. You know how careful a girl has got to be—specially when Nature has blessed her with looks like mine. I can usually tell by their eyes—(*She tries to get a look at MAITLAND's, but the clever man outwits her.*) I am not saying nothing against Mr. White. So far, he has behaved like a real gennulmun. But if I should ferget myself to the extent of—oh, you know what artists are—they, and sailors—

MAITLAND

I think I can practically assure you that my admirable conduct will continue unchanged.

ETTA (*cannily*)

You cannot tell what'll happen, if you take to paintin'. I know all about artists: women to them, are as tinders to the flames. . . .

NANCY (*to MAITLAND*)

—If you don't believe it, read the *Tabloids*. (*To ETTA.*) I shall vouch for Mr. White. He is not at all combustible. Come now, will you—or will you not?

ETTA

No, Ma'am—I cannot do it. I would like to help you, but I simply *dassent*—do not dare to—do it.

NANCY

Very well. You are an extremely silly girl. That's all—(*ETTA turns to go out.*) Oh—by the way—in the morning please pack my old foulard that I spoke about—and the gray *crêpe de chine*. I want them sent to the C. O. S.

ETTA (*heartbroken at having to wear something less becoming next Thursday*)

But—didn't you say—?

NANCY

I was mistaken. I thought you were more obliging.

ETTA

But I *am* obliging—

NANCY

You have given me no indication of it.

[*ETTA looks searchingly at MAITLAND. He shifts uneasily in his chair.*]

ETTA

But Ma'am—I want to *improve* myself. I want to be a lady, Mrs. White. In all my spare time I read books. I study you and your friends, and seek to *em-ulate* you.

NANCY (*kindly, after a disconcerted pause*)

Thank you, Etta. But surely every lady should know something about art. Now Mr. White is a very charming, cultivated man—(MAITLAND *rises abruptly.*)—Your hours with him would be a great opportunity for you.

ETTA (*with difficulty*)

Well—well, there is one thing we would have to have an understanding on: none of his gennulmun friends could come in while I—while I was—was—

[*She is unable to go on.*]

NANCY (*puzzled*)

—While you were—? (*It suddenly dawns upon her, but she controls her mirth.*) But I cannot see your objection. I should think you would look very charming in your—(*To MAITLAND.*) Do you think one of my *dresses* will do—or shall we have one made?

[ETTA *looks first surprised, then considerably relieved as she echoes the wonderful word “dresses.”*]

MAITLAND

—Better have it made—

[ETTA's *face lights up.*]

NANCY (*smiling*)

Well, Etta—?

ETTA (*beaming*)

Oh, *yes*, Ma'am—I didn't understand. Yes, Ma'am—with pleasure.—And any of his friends that want to look on—

NANCY

Well—that's better.—You may bring the tray in now—five glasses. Mr. White will give you more explicit directions later. (ETTA *fixes* MAITLAND *with an appraising stare, borne with difficulty by him. She finally goes out.* NANCY *now laughs without constraint.*) Oh—Matey—I couldn't have stood it a minute longer! Virtue in jeopardy! What a brave fight she put up!

MAITLAND (*shaking himself*)

Whew!—I feel like the Seven Deadlies! I could do with a cocktail. . . .

NANCY

They're coming.—You know, I don't think she's at all certain about you yet.

MAITLAND

I hope she understands that I'm going to paint, and not conduct a finishing-school. Seriously though, Nancy—we're insane to rush into this thing as if—

NANCY (*her merriment gone at once*)

Rush?—After twenty years? My dear!

[WARREN'S voice is heard from the hall.

WARREN (*expounding it*)

—So you see, the entire organization is composed of interlocking units—

MAITLAND (*opening his hand to release them*)

All right! There they go—the two-in-the-hand! We're off for the bird-in-the-bush!

[NANCY *exclaims in joy.*

RICKY (*seriously*)

I think that cost-accounting system is a knock-out, sir.

[*He and WARREN come in, dressed for dinner.*

NANCY

Mr. Warren, Maitland has something important to tell you—

[*ETTA enters, with a tray of glasses and a cocktail-shaker.*

WARREN (*to MAITLAND*)

What about? No business, I hope.

[*ETTA places the tray on the table. MAITLAND begins to shake the shaker. ETTA watches him like a hawk. He tries to cover his embarrassment.*

MAITLAND (*giving the shaker a final shake*)

I'll tell you later. Prepare for the worst! (*To ETTA.*)

I'll serve them. . . . (*Still she watches him, transfixed. He loses patience.*) I say I will serve them!

[*ETTA goes out. MAITLAND fills the glasses, and gives one to NANCY and one to WARREN. RONNY appears in hall. She is in evening-dress and leaves her wrap in ETTA's hands as she sails past her.*

NANCY

We must hurry through these. The birds will be ruined.

[*Nobody notices RONNY.*

RONNY (*in self-defense*)

Good evening, Ronny—

[*RICKY rapidly reaches her side.*

NANCY

My dear—how sweet you look!

RONNY (*why not be honest?*)

I think I look pretty well, myself.

RICKY

—Plain face, but a nifty dresser.

RONNY

Hello, Handsome—I hardly knew you. Aren't you clean!

RICKY

Father's in the business.

NANCY

This is Miss Duane, Mr. Warren.

WARREN

Very glad to meet you, Miss Duane.

RONNY (*in her cool manner with strangers*)

How do you do? (RICKY *quickly whispers something to her. She goes to WARREN, smiling and holding out her hand to him.*) Oh—Mr. Warren! How delightful! I hear you're to have a new laborer next week?

WARREN

Indeed I am—*Rocky!* (RICKY *scowls at the name.*) He begins in what we call "The Kitchen."

RONNY

How amusing! I should think he'd be simply priceless, mixing cold cream. He's such an oil-can as it is, that—

RICKY

Father! Give her a cocktail—quick!

[*He takes one from MAITLAND and gives it to her.*]

RONNY (*accepting it*)

Good dog.

[MAITLAND *gives* RICKY *another*, and *takes one for himself.*]

NANCY (*to WARREN*)

Will he need an apron?

WARREN

White overalls!

RONNY (*slowly sipping her cocktail*)

Little Purity—with a lily in his hair. . . .

RICKY (*disregarding her and raising his glass*)

Here's to bigger and better soap!

WARREN (*to RONNY*)

Never you mind—Rocky and I—

[RONNY *all but chokes at the repetition of the name.*]

RICKY (*politely*)

The name is "Ricky," Sir.

WARREN

—Ricky and I are going to smile through to success—aren't we, old fellow?

RICKY

Chief—we're going to laugh out loud!

MAITLAND (*from the table*)

Here, G. T.—give me your glass.

[WARREN *shakes his head*, and he and NANCY *place their empty glasses upon the tray*.

RICKY (*to RONNY*)

That's Mr. Warren's motto: "Use our Pearly Paste, and Smile with Confidence."

RONNY (*over her cocktail*)

Gosh, you're coarse. . . .

RICKY (*aggrieved*)

I *must* say, I fail to see anything coarse about—

NANCY

Never mind, Ricky. (*To WARREN and MAITLAND.*)
Are we ready . . . ?

[NANCY, WARREN and MAITLAND *go to the door*.
RONNY *is finishing her cocktail*.

RICKY

—Come on, Beautiful—lap it up!

RONNY (*putting down her glass*)

M-m-m-m—I shall be charming at dinner.

[MAITLAND *stands at the door to let them all pass, and turns to follow*. NANCY *reënters hurriedly, and in reply to his questioning glance says*, "I'll come in a minute." *He goes out and NANCY tours the room, turning out the lamps one by one*. RICKY *calls from the dining-room*.

RICKY (*imperatively*)

Dear-r-r-r-r-est—!

NANCY (*singing it out, with a falling inflection*)

Com-m-m-m-m-m-ing—!

[*She turns out the last lamp, and is rapidly crossing the darkened room to the lighted hall.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

The Studio in the attic is a spacious, rectangular room with a large dormer window cut in the back wall, and in the right wall two smaller windows through which may be seen the tip of an apple branch, in bloom. The stairway is in a small recess at the Back. The small door at the Left—as you enter—is the entrance to the playroom.

At one side, there is a long table and three or four plain chairs. By the large window, bookshelves and a comfortable sofa.

Being essentially a workroom, there is a daïs with a throne-chair for the model, and easel (turned away from the front), a small work-table with brushes, paints and other tools, and a life-sized lay-figure (a great family joke, by the way) which sprawls upon the floor in a thoroughly gauche manner.

With the exception of a bear-skin and a small rug, the floor is uncovered. On the walls are two or three good prints. There are also two mounted heads of wild goats, upon the smaller of which a red Spanish berét is set at a rakish angle.

The fact that the studio was once an attic is still apparent, to the close observer, through the medium of only partially hidden trunks, and a dappled-gray hobby-horse.

It is late the following May—about four in the afternoon. MAITLAND, in a smock, with a small daub of

paint on his cheek, is busily painting at his easel. ETTA poses in the throne-chair. She wears a simple, exquisite afternoon-dress, and a small string of pearls at her throat. Her hands rest in her lap. Her hair is dressed most becomingly, and the transformation into a charming lady of unusual grace and beauty is quite complete. For a few moments MAITLAND paints silently. Gradually ETTA's features lose their repose. An expression of acute suffering grows in her eyes. She wrinkles her nose and sets her teeth. Finally:

ETTA (*at the end of her tether, poor dear*)

Mr. White—I have jest got to do it.

MAITLAND (*patiently ceasing his work*)

All right, Etta—go ahead—(ETTA *with a great sigh of relief, vigorously scratches her nose.*) Would you like to rest for a moment?

ETTA

Oh—may I . . . ? (MAITLAND *gestures acquiescence, lays brushes on the work-table, and goes to the open windows, where the bees are humming among the apple-blossoms.*) Sech a relief!

[MAITLAND *picks a small sprig of blossoms and presents it to her.*

MAITLAND

Here—this will refresh you.

[*For his own refreshment, he lights a cigarette. ETTA inhales the fragrance of the blossoms and regards the twig lovingly.*

ETTA

Oh—thank you. M-m-m-m—I jest simply love apple-blossoms.

MAITLAND

You have an unhappy knack of pronouncing "just" and "such" as if they were spelled with "e's" instead of "u's."

ETTA

"Just"—"Such."

MAITLAND

That's better. . . .

ETTA (*diffidently*)

It's nice, being a lady, Mr. White—(*Lest he misunderstand her.*)—Of course, I *am* a lady. But—(*Looking down at her dress and fingering her pearls.*)—I mean a de luxe one—like those that come to see Mrs. White. How I'd love to be like they are—and talk the way they do!

MAITLAND (*absently, as he studies the portrait*)

You should practise—in private.—It's only the mouth that bothers me now.—"The Portrait of a Lady,' by an unknown painter"—(*Reflectively.*) When we've sold it to some great lover of art, *then* perhaps I'll sign it—(*Softly.*) When—(*He extinguishes his cigarette and picks up his brush and palette.*) Come on—are you ready?

ETTA

Jest—*just* a minute. . . . (*Once more she strikes her pose, and MAITLAND silently continues his painting.*) Is it really almost done?

MAITLAND (*engrossed*)

It may be two minutes—it may be two days.

ETTA

I could jest cry, I could—

MAITLAND

Please don't—I'm no good at marines. (*He paints rapidly for a few moments. Then stands off and regards her quizzically from several positions.*) Softer lines around the mouth—(*Just to make it sure, she grins.*) No! No!—You know better than that! Soft, I said. (*He studies her attempt.*) Bring your eyes into it. . . . (*He shakes his head hopelessly, but continues to paint. Suddenly a little laugh escapes her.*) What are you laughing at?

ETTA

It just struck me funny—here you've been trying for months to make that look like me, when with a camera you could get it perfect in a jiffy.

[MAITLAND *stares at her speechless.*]

MAITLAND (*softly*)

Oh my God. . . . (*With increased vehemence:*) You sit there prattling of cameras, when you ought to be thanking heaven for the dignity that's done you! Don't you see the chance you've got? Who was Helen of Troy, but a pretty thing with convenient morals? Who was—La Gioconda, but a woman with a smile? If there'd been no Homer to sing of Helen, no Leonardo to fix that smile forever with his brush, they'd both be dead and forgotten as—(*He picks up the twig of apple-blossoms.*)—as this will be tomorrow! And—(*She is staring at him without a trace of comprehension in her face.*)—and you haven't the faintest idea of what I'm talk-

ing about. (*He throws the twig out of the window, falls into thought for a moment, and then speaks again, with restrained but poignant feeling.*) Is there nothing that will make you understand what this means? (*He indicates the portrait.*) Can't you realize that what is here is more than merely you and my work? That in it, there's a—spirit that can strike life into—(*He holds the prostrate lay-figure up to view.*)—a lump of sawdust, like this? You?—Why it can immortalize you! Let me see in your face—joy—wonder—consecration!

[*A big order: ETTA bites her lip anxiously.*

ETTA

All at once, or—one at a time?

[MAITLAND *shakes his head, as if to say "No use," and placing the lay-figure at the foot of the easel, again ponders a means whereby he may instill into his subject's spirit a something that will show in her face. Finally an idea strikes him, and bringing a high stool to a position directly in front of ETTA, he sits upon it, and proceeds to draw for her as alluring a verbal picture as he can:*

MAITLAND

Now listen! You want to be a lady, don't you?—Well—I'll make you one. Think—up on Fifth Avenue, there's a palatial white edifice, known to its friends as the Metropolitan Museum. There, in a long, high room lavishly embellished with palms and other potted plants, *you sit, you, Etta*—the hostess at a most de luxe reception. The room is filled with fashionable ladies in their jewels and furs and orchids. Their stylish escorts stand about with silk

hats in their white-gloved hands. From everywhere, they've come thronging to pay you homage—earls and dukes and duchesses—ambassadors and their wives . . . (*Can it be that he, too, has read "The Earl's Revenge"?* . . . And for all time, you will live in their memories. In the far capitals of the world exquisite women will sit before their glasses in costly boudoirs, and whisper sadly, "Ah—if I were as lovely as she!" Handsome men, on whose word the fates of empires hang, will pause in the middle of an important stroke of diplomacy, and sigh to themselves, "Ah—what would I not do, for the love of such a lady!" You will be with them at their rich dinners—their gorgeous balls. Books will be written about you, and elegantly bound in leather. And you will hold your queenly sway not for a season of two, like other fine ladies—but for a hundred years, *two* hundred! You, Etta, *you*—the finest lady of them all! (*His voice sinks.*) Can you—see it—feel it—? (*A look of wonderment has grown in her eyes. She sits entranced, her face transfigured with a kind of gracious, queenly joy. MAITLAND draws a deep and grateful breath and rising goes slowly to the easel, with his eyes still upon her, repeating softly.*) The—finest—lady—of—them—all—(*He paints rapidly, but with infinite care, looking from her to the portrait and back again. A few more strokes—and tossing his brush in the air, he exclaims jubilantly.*) There! By heaven, we've got it! Etta—you *Love*—we've got it! (*ETTA comes out of her trance and starts forward. MAITLAND seizes her hand and drags her to the portrait.*) Look—it's done!

[*She gazes at the marvel with widening eyes, while*

MAITLAND *gleefully daubs a sign "Fresh Paint" on a piece of card-board.*

ETTA

Oh—if that isn't simply the grandest thing!—And to think that it's me—a lady like that! Oh, *isn't* she lovely! (MAITLAND *places the sign on the corner of the easel, thereby eliciting a giggle from ETTA—not a difficult achievement.*)—Jest as if it was a park bench! Mr. White—you do the *cutest* things. . . . [In sheer jubilation, MAITLAND *takes her hands and dances her around.*

MAITLAND (*to the tune of "Round and Round the Mulberry Bush"*)

It's done! It's done! It's done—done—done—so early in the morning!

ETTA (*breathlessly*)

But it's *afternoon!*

MAITLAND

—So early in the *morning*—!

[ETTA, *at first a reluctant partner, at length abandons herself to the celebration.*

MAITLAND AND ETTA (*as they dance around*)

It's done! It's done, done, done—so early in the morning!

[NANCY *enters, attired—can you believe it—in a short black housedress, and a white apron.*

NANCY

The ceilings may hold out downstairs, but the odds are against it. What's it all about?

MAITLAND (*ten years off his age*)

—History, my dear!—I've finished the portrait! We were celebrating the dawn of a new epoch in American Art—(*He performs a pirouette.*)—So early in the morning!

NANCY

Finished . . . ? Oh—wonderful—! (*She goes swiftly to the portrait and regards it with shining eyes.*) Maitland—I could go on my knees to it. . . .

MAITLAND

I'm—glad it pleases you, dear—

NANCY

Pleases me!—Can't you see what's in my silly eyes? (*She blinks them rapidly and laughs.*) There—I'm a fool. Oh!—Those pearls might be alive! You know, one feels awfully cocky, with a husband who can—(*She sees ETTA staring at her and trying to control her laughter.*)—What is it you find so diverting?

ETTA (*with the air of the lady MAITLAND has painted*)

Your appearance. It amuses one.—Chawming, though—really *quate* chawming. . . .

NANCY

You'd better go finish cleaning the silver. (ETTA, *somewhat diminished, goes out.*) Maitland—you've simply ruined her. She'll serve the children's dinner-guests to-night like a queen throwing pence to the poor.

MAITLAND (*amused*)

Why not have a buffet supper up here, instead?
[NANCY is struck by the idea.]

NANCY

May we?—Splendid! They'd love it.—And incidentally, with all this—atmosphere, we can figure on less food.

MAITLAND

—How many are they?

NANCY

Sixteen, counting you and me—the prospective ushers and bridesmaids, you know. They've hit on rather a sweet way of announcing it at Ronny's dance. Ricky's to be a troubadour, and Ronny a Seventeenth Century lady. I've a costume for you. . . .

MAITLAND (*as he scrapes paint from the palette*)

Good.—How *are* the funds, dear?

NANCY

They haven't been lower since the day after our wedding-trip.

MAITLAND

Thank the Lord there's a picture for sale—and a dividend due.

NANCY (*regarding the pile of mail on the table*)

You haven't touched your mail since Tuesday!

MAITLAND

Me and the Goddess has been talkin' confidential.

NANCY (*looking over the mail*)

Perhaps it's in this lot—no. . . .

MAITLAND

It'll come Monday.

NANCY

Here's one from your broker, dated May 24th. . . .

MAITLAND

A circular, probably.

[*He takes the mail from NANCY, slitting the envelopes with his scalpel.*]

NANCY

Oh, I meant to ask you,—are these of any use? (*She takes two square slips of paper from the pocket of her apron.*) They were in the pocket of that smock you wanted washed. (*Giving him one of them, she studies the other.*) They're not sketches, are they?—I had one fearful moment when I thought you'd gone stark, staring modernist.

MAITLAND

Not I!—This is merely a demonstration proving that if a National Advertising Campaign increased our sales—I mean Warren's sales—only four per cent, it would more than pay for itself.

NANCY (*dryly*)

What could be fairer than that? (*Proffering the second bit of paper.*) And this—?

MAITLAND (*more reluctantly*)

—It's a diagram showing that by running the raw mix from the vats direct to the ripeners by pipe, we'd save at least two and one-half per cent on our production costs.

NANCY

Most ingenious of you. I suppose I'd best reserve a *separate* drawer for these.

[*She holds out her hand for them. MAITLAND stares at them dumbly for a moment, then tears them up and jams the pieces into his pocket.*

MAITLAND

Habit again!—Must I ride two horses my whole life long?

NANCY (*calmly*)

That, I presume, is the question.

[MAITLAND *begins to read his mail.*

MAITLAND

Remind me to pay my insurance policy Tuesday, will you? Here's another notice from them. And the infernal income-tax on the fifteenth. Otherwise, they'll start charging interest on it. I hope the dividend's not late.

[NANCY *takes a bill from his hands.*

NANCY

Here—I'll take that. It's a bill for Jean's mumps.

—Whew! They've gone up—fifty dollars a mump!

MAITLAND (*giving her another*)

What do you want done about this?

NANCY (*which she returns promptly*)

Nothing. By now those Armenians must be living on caviar.

MAITLAND (*reading a letter*)

Good Lord!

NANCY

What's the matter?

MAITLAND (*as he goes to the sofa*)

Is this a morning paper?

NANCY

—"The Times." Dear—what is it? (*She reads the letter which MAITLAND extends to her.*) Oh—how awful. . . .

[MAITLAND *opens the newspaper to the financial page.*

MAITLAND

It may have been a false alarm. I don't see anything. Yes—here it is—. Here it is, all right—and worse than they prophesied, too.

NANCY (*in spite of herself*)

If you'd only got this letter in time!

MAITLAND (*ironically*)

Ah, no!—I was too busy with my brushes, to watch the market, and read my mail. (*He scans the letter again.*) Well—I've got to have cash by Tuesday, loss or no loss. You'd better take Hubbard's advice, and hold on to your stock. I'll go to town and see him right away. A fine mess I've got us into!—Maitland and his money—they were soon parted, weren't they?

NANCY (*her comforting arms about him*)

Dear—*don't* say things bitterly, like that. We didn't expect this to be a bed of roses.

[*Up from the stairs comes RICKY, in tennis clothes and over one ear a troubadour cap, with flowing feather. He has a guitar tied around his neck by two long silk stockings, and thrums a chord as he enters.*

RICKY

Say, Nancy—where's the rest of my costu—(*He discovers his parents once more unmindful of their dignity.*) Will you two *never* grow up? (NANCY and MAITLAND *part, looking a little sheepish, and MAITLAND goes to a chair at the window, where he reads the paper.*) I feel more like Chanticleer than a troubadour. You don't mind my freezing onto a pair of your stockings, do you? Lord! You must have long legs!

NANCY (*primly*)

I mind very much. There's a ribbon with the rest of it downstairs.

RICKY

I cannot relinquish the socks. (*He crosses to MAITLAND, thrumming and singing.*) "List to me, Lady Love, hark to my plea—" (*But stops suddenly at the sight of MAITLAND's face.*) What's the matter, old soldier?—you look as though a mule had kicked you.

MAITLAND

Two mules, Rick—

NANCY

Your father has had bad news from his broker.

RICKY (*all bantering aside*)

Gosh—that's a shame. I've got four hundred and sixty saved up, if that'll help any—

MAITLAND

The money for your wedding trip?

RICKY

What's Bermuda—compared to our own Niagara Falls?

MAITLAND

Thanks, son—but I don't think I'll need it. (*With an attempt at jocosity.*) I may sell my picture over the week-end.

NANCY

It's finished. You haven't seen it yet. . . .
[RICKY examines the portrait admiringly.]

RICKY

I call this painting! Say, how about my buying it?

MAITLAND

You haven't enough.

RICKY

I'll take it on installments. Listen, lady—(*He prepares to sing to the picture.*) "List to me, Lady Love—"

[*But MAITLAND brings the serenade to a deservedly abrupt conclusion.*]

NANCY

What have you children been doing?

[RICKY finds a comfortable place on the window-seat.]

RICKY

Ronny's had the nag out—went home to change—coming right over. I've been shooting clay pigeons—only got twelve out of twenty-five—but I gave the others a nasty scare. (*NANCY laughs.*) Say Father,

G. T.'s up here with the Thompsons over Sunday. He said he might drop in to see you.

MAITLAND

I hope he does. Is he still handling most of my work?

RICKY

No—didn't I tell you?—a new man came in three weeks ago. His name's Chadwick—

MAITLAND (*sharply*)

T. L. Chadwick—?

RICKY

I think so. He's famous as the Battle of the Marne—and acts it. They say he's dragging down forty-five thousand a year. He's taken over your job—I thought G. T.'d keep it open for a year, anyway.

[*This has all been a considerable shock for MAITLAND. For a moment he stares speechlessly at RICKY, then turns to NANCY, speaking in a changed voice.*]

MAITLAND

What time do you expect Geoff?

NANCY

About four-thirty.

MAITLAND

Good—I'll have time to see him before I leave.

[*He goes out by the stairs. RICKY rises, and with a gesture of disgust with himself, goes to a chair near NANCY.*]

NANCY

Rick—you must learn tact. You couldn't have chosen

a worse moment to speak of that new man at Warren's.

RICKY (*shamefacedly*)

I knew it as soon as I opened my face. I ought to be shot. But after all, Nancy, I can't say that I blame G. T.

NANCY (*suddenly*)

Are you really happy there?

RICKY (*off-hand*)

Sure. Why not?

NANCY

Tell me honestly!

RICKY (*confidentially*)

Well—you see it's this way: When I look at the men higher up in the office—men of about fifty or so—and realize that if I barge through in really noble style that that's where *I'll* land at fifty—I don't exactly jump up and down and clap my hands at the prospect. But after all—that's life, isn't it, darling?—You get some things, and some things you don't. And I've packed a *couple* of hearts full in Ronny and you—(*To prove it, he kisses her cheek.*) You're a wench after my own heart.

NANCY (*persisting*)

But *don't* you miss your architecture?

RICKY (*strumming*)

—Rarely think of it.

[RONNY comes in, very fresh and sprightly, as the result of a ride, a tub and a pretty new dress.]

RONNY (*however*)

I don't expect to sit down for several centuries.

RICKY

It serves you right for jumping that green mare. If I were her—

NANCY

"If I were *she*."

RICKY

If I were her—I'd have bounced you off on your nose.

RONNY (*so sweetly*)

No, precious one—if you'd been the mare, I'd have taken you over the roof. (*She sees the portrait, which occasions a deep breath of admiration.*) Oh, this is too beautiful.

NANCY (*who is putting MAITLAND's paint-table in order*)

I'm inclined to agree with you, Ronny.

[*But there is a sudden new interest, for RONNY sees the lay-figure. She picks it up and hugs it passionately.*]

RONNY

Oh—I want her! I want her!

RICKY

—Her name's "Genevieve." She's Dad's mistress.

NANCY

Ricky!

RICKY (*with a gesture*)

Art's his mistress. Genevieve is Art.

[RONNY takes from a chair a piece of the same stuff as ETTA's dress, and wraps it about the figure's shoulders. Henceforward, "Genevieve" remains gratefully near her.

NANCY (*as she moves toward the stairs*)

I'll be back in a few minutes. If Mr. Nichols comes, you entertain him, will you?

RICKY

With pleasure. (NANCY goes out, and RICKY turns to his RONNY.) As studios go—not so nasty—wot? [He lights a cigarette for her and one for himself.

RONNY

I love it.

RICKY

Nancy calls it the Zoo. (*He takes her hand and conducts her across the room.*) Here you see a mountain-goat, at the age of seven months. And here—(*Indicating another specimen on the opposite wall.*)—the same goat, several years later.

[RONNY nods gravely. RICKY, before letting her hand go, raises it to his lips and kisses it. For a silent moment life's infinite fulfillment looks out to each, from the other's eyes. RONNY speaks softly.

RONNY

You dear—(*But, after all, one must be practical.*) Not very stiff!—Chuck us a cushion, will you, Dreadful?

[RICKY procures a cushion from the window-seat and another from the sofa.

RICKY (*preparing a place for them on the floor*)

Lord—three sets of tennis—and I'm fit for the ash-can! This working indoors all week takes it out of you, do you know it?

[*They seat themselves, back to back on the cushions.*]

RONNY (*sleepily*)

Um—. How do you *really* like it there, Stupe?

RICKY

Child, I'm engrossed!

RONNY

Sure?

RICKY

Absolutely! I'd no idea soap and toothpaste could hand me such a thrill. I had a talk with G. T. this morning. He told me I'd rate three thousand as soon's I marched back down the aisle.

RONNY

He's a sweet old thing. We'll be filthy rich. (*Yawns.*)
Umph!

RICKY

I regard that as a deliberately unfriendly act.

RONNY

I'm a dead bunny.

RICKY

Not too sprightly myself. Let's play shut-eye for a while.

RONNY (*closing her eyes*)

You're on. Night-O. . . .

RICKY (*hunching his shoulders*)

Move over.

RONNY

Great oaf!

[*They close their eyes, and there is a short pause.*]

RICKY

“. . . and God bless everybody in this house.”

[*Another short pause.*]

RONNY

Two minds without a single thought. (*—And still another. Then RONNY begins to wriggle.*) Hell’s bells—I’m being prodded in the spine. What is it?—something in your pocket, or just—anatomy?

[*RICKY is wide-awake in a moment.*]

RICKY (*eagerly*)

Oh—I forgot. (*Rising, he puts out his cigarette, and extracting an old book from his pocket, again seats himself.*) Look here, Beautiful—I picked this up in a bookstore this noon. Sixteen dollars. It’s a first edition of Mossgrave’s “Architecture, and ye Associated Artes”—published in 1611—illustrated with woodcuts—rare as hell.

RONNY (*regarding it sleepily*)

Priceless!

RICKY

You said it. And look—

[*He opens the book to the flyleaf and proudly points to the signature thereon.*]

RONNY

"I. Jones—His Book."—Should I be impressed?

RICKY (*ironically*)

A little. Do you know who it is?

RONNY

I bite: Who?

RICKY (*impressively*)

This book belonged to Inigo Jones.

RONNY

What a screaming name. (*To "Genevieve."*) Did you hear that, Genevieve?—"In-again Jones." (*To RICKY.*) She wants to know who he was?

RICKY (*witheringly*)

—Just one of the greatest architects that ever lived, that's all. Designed Whitehall, and Queen's House, and a few miserable little things like that. Not *very* famous.

RONNY (*somewhat abashed*)

I am the indian club among dumbbells.

RICKY (*studying the pages*)

—And look at this—isn't it great? (*He becomes engrossed in the book. RONNY watches him closely.*) Honestly if I could design a façade like that, I'd die happy.—And this gargoyle—you see the vine-motif has been carried—

RONNY (*quietly*)

Put your arm around me, Ricky.

[*Absently he does so.*]

RICKY (*going right on*)

—The vine-motif has been carried out even here. And I'll be damned—this must be one of the very earliest developments of the rose-window—

RONNY (*experimentally*)

Rick—I want to be kissed—(RICKY *kisses her. A piece of paper falls from the book to the floor.* RONNY *sighs.*) Oh—that's rather delightful.

RICKY (*for the moment, genuinely moved*)

Damn right! (*But only for the moment, for he turns back to the book, almost immediately.*)—The facing shows that it's at a very primitive stage—

RONNY (*a certain heart-breaking realization is slowly tightening about her*)

Does it . . . ?

RICKY

Um. . . . (*He sees that she has picked up the piece of paper, and is studying it listlessly.*) Here—lay off!—That's not finished yet!

RONNY

What is it?

RICKY

It's a plan I was making for our new diggings. Now you know what made me late for your dinner last night.

[RONNY's face lights up; here is hope.

RONNY (*eagerly—handing it to him*)

Tell me about it!

RICKY (*explaining*)

You see, I wanted something we could add on to—the way Father and Nancy did to this. First comes the cellar—for the furnace and things. Downstairs: hall, living-room, dining-room—that little hole is the library, kitchen out back, servants' quarters above it. Upstairs: four bedrooms—yours and mine, and two guests' rooms. Three baths. Top floor: small store-room and playroom. . . .

RONNY

For us . . . ?

RICKY (*solemnly*)

For our progeny.

RONNY

Isn't it big! How many do you think there ought to be?

RICKY

Oh—conservative—three or four. . . .

RONNY (*thoughtfully*)

Well—I'll see what I can—(*She leans over to examine the plans more closely.*) What are these?

RICKY (*with additional enthusiasm*)

Ah—here's the real work! Look, Beautiful—the stables—miniature reproduction of Charles the Second's at Windsor. And this is the kennels—just like some I once saw for St. Bernards at a monastery near St. Moritz.

RONNY (*regarding him oddly*)

They're more interesting than the house, aren't they?

RICKY

Ever so much!—You see it's one of my pet convictions that you can make any building beautiful—even a cow-shed, without in the least contradicting its original charac—(*He regards her in surprise.*) Dearest!—What's the matter with you?—You look like the very devil—

RONNY (*confused*)

I—? Why I—don't be a fool, Rick—(*Her hand brushes across her eyes. She sighs, shakes her head, and laughs shortly.*) I'm—just simply in a fog over tonight.

[*RICKY regards her dubiously, then becomes matter-of-fact once more.*]

RICKY

Oh say—I don't want to muff that troubadour stunt. Tell me the plan again, will you?

RONNY (*lifelessly*)

It's not my idea, you know. It's Mother's: We're to have supper on the south terrace at twelve. When they're all seated, you amble up below the second story window, and begin—

[*RICKY begins thrumming and singing gaily. As he does so, RONNY frowns over the revelatory little slip of paper.*]

RICKY (*singing and strumming*)

“List to me, Lady Love, hark to my plea:
Love holdeth no bounty so precious as thee,
Flown my heart's gaiety, lovelorn my life,
Sad and desolate I, save I have thee to wife.”

—And then you press a red, red rose to your lips, and toss it lightly to me, and I catch it in my teeth, or something, and *voilà!*—(*He strikes a chord.*) The kitty is out of the bag! A marriage has been arranged—

RONNY (*slowly*)

And—suppose—instead—I just—turned away—and shut the window—*would* you be sad and desolate—?

RICKY

On the contrary I should execute a few choice clog steps and sing:

“Be she fairer than the day
Or the flow’ry meads in May—
What care I how fair she be
If she be not so to me?”

[*During the song RONNY has rolled the plans together into a small roll.*]

RONNY (*rising*)

Is that the way you’d really feel, do you think?

RICKY (*gaily*)

Sure!

RONNY (*quietly*)

I’m glad.—Because I—don’t—

RICKY

Don’t what?

[*His soft strumming continues, an ominous accompaniment to the words that follow.*]

RONNY

Don't love you, Rick.

[*The lay-figure is permitted to topple to the floor.*

RICKY *looks at RONNY, appalled, and then laughs.*

RICKY

No—that's why you're marrying me!

RONNY

It's—why I'm *not*. . . .

RICKY (*not to be taken in*)

Too late now.

RONNY

It's—just this side of too late. (RICKY *is trying bravely to smile.*) I mean it, you know.

RICKY (*with difficulty; his smile comes and goes. He stands the guitar against a chair and goes to her*)

Ronny—please find some other way to—ride me.

I'm—you're—I—you see, I'm such a fool about you, that I can't—play up to this.

RONNY (*speaking in a small voice*)

It—breaks me into little pieces—but I mean it.

[*He takes her hand.*

RICKY (*dazed and incredulous*)

Ronny—you—you simply *can't*.

[RONNY *withdraws her hand.*

RONNY

Do you remember that day last Autumn—what I told you about Father and Mother—? (RICKY *tries to speak, but nods, instead.*)—How I said I was go-

ing to marry the next nice person I was—fond of?—You were the nice person, Ricky—(*She shakes her head, sorrowfully.*) Oh—the nicest one!—And I thought surely I'd love you. But—I don't. And I can't—just *can't* go through with it, without—

RICKY (*with effort*)

I—don't know what to do. I don't know what's expected of me. I—don't quite understand it. Nearly—but not quite. I can't believe that you—you've simply got to tell me some more about it. . . . (*There is a sound at the stairs. RICKY glances over his shoulder. His voice lowers.*) Hell—Nichols, I suppose—the playroom—quick!

[*He holds the playroom door open and follows her through, closing it after them. ETTA comes up the stairs, dressed as a lady still, but carrying a sobering dust-cloth. She places the guitar upon a trunk and begins aimlessly to dust. She goes to the portrait, looks at it adoringly, turns about, as though posing before a mirror, the better to see her profile, then suddenly pirouettes to her first position. She picks up "Genevieve," and looking about to see that she is alone, places her upon a chair facing the dais. Then, draping herself in the throne-chair, she touches her hair lightly with the arched tips of her fingers, assumes a rather weary expression, and begins to talk to her inanimate companion:*

ETTA (*affectedly*)

Yes—*such* weather! Just *too* dreadful! I've had no gulf for weeks. . . . (*Lowly, to herself.*) Gulf—golf—galf—gowf—guff—(*This satisfies her. Aloud.*)

—I have had no guff for weeks. (*A pause. Then she smiles, and extends a properly limp hand to the air.*) Oh—ah—how-do-you-do?—So good of you to come. (*She waits for the inaudible answer.*) No! What a piddy! (*Lowly, to herself.*) Piddy—pity—pitt-ty— (*This is quite satisfactory, so she tries it aloud.*) What a pitt-ty! (*Pause. To “Genevieve”:*) But my deah—my bridge is *simply* deplorable! (*Pause. This has been a good one, and she is well pleased with herself. There is more than one person at this most de luxe of receptions, so she greets another.*) Oh—ah—how-do-you-do? (*The response is audible this time, for GEOFFREY NICHOLS has quietly mounted the stairs to the studio.*)

NICHOLS

How do you do?

[ETTA has one very bad moment, but fortunately regains composure in time.

ETTA (*what’s good for one, is good for another*)

So—good of you to come—

NICHOLS (*a little surprised*)

Thanks. Let me present myself: I am Geoffrey Nichols.

ETTA (*this, with effort*)

How do you do? I am—Miss—Henrietta Hone— (*With a gracious gesture.*) Won’t you sit down?

NICHOLS

Thanks—(*He finds “Genevieve,” however, the occupant of the logical chair. Tenderly, he places her upon the floor, and takes her place, facing ETTA.*)

An extraordinary person at the door told me that Mrs. White would be up here—

ETTA

Oh, yes—that was Katie. What a piddy—
[*Oh! She has muffed it!*]

NICHOLS

Not at all! I consider myself very fortunate. Are you staying with the Whites?

ETTA

Yes.

NICHOLS

Charming, aren't they?

ETTA (*a little less securely*)

Yes.

[*Pause. NICHOLS is rather taken aback by her apparent aloofness.*]

NICHOLS (*at a loss*)

Er—

[ETTA *turns quickly.*]

ETTA

My deah—my bridge is *simply* deplorable!

NICHOLS (*sympathetically*)

I'm *so* sorry. Mine is, too. Will they expect us to play? (ETTA *looks away, not answering.*) I hope not. I've just gone two rounds of goff, and—

ETTA

Of *what* . . . ?

NICHOLS

Of goff—and lost six balls, and most of my mind. (ETTA, *unnoticed by him, forms the word “goff” several times with her lips.*) I’ve been chanting the “Götterdämmerung,” with variations, most of the afternoon—

[*It is not a distaste for Wagner that causes ETTA to flinch.*]

ETTA

Mr. Nichols—I do not consider such language at all refined.

[*For one appalled moment, NICHOLS stares at her. Then he realizes that she is, of course, purposely burlesquing. This guest of the Whites’ has, indeed, both originality and charm! He laughs delightedly.*]

NICHOLS

Delicious! (*He settles himself more comfortably, and speaks with amused gravity.*) Of course, I ain’t exactly what you’d call a *gent*—but I gotta hearta gold. (ETTA *never changes expression.*) How long have you been here with the Whites?

ETTA

Oh—quite awhile—

NICHOLS

I must take Nancy to task for concealing her guests this way. I’m a native now, you know. I’ve taken the Burton place for the Summer. I can’t think why I haven’t seen you. . . .

ETTA

Do you attend the dances at the Odd Fellows Hall?

NICHOLS (*not to be outdone*)

No—I'm of the Loyal Order of Moose. But I hear they're real tasty affairs.

ETTA (*soulfully*)

They are grand.

NICHOLS (*we are getting on*)

What a delightful person you are! Won't you lunch with me tomorrow?

ETTA (*slowly*)

Why—I *can't*—

NICHOLS

Then when *may* I see you?

ETTA (*hesitatingly*)

Uh—uh—Thursday afternoon?

NICHOLS

Splendid! We'll motor out to Waukubuc.

ETTA

That would be elegant.

NICHOLS (*mockingly*)

“Excuse our dust!” (*A silence; he finds nothing to top that mental image of a red and white pennant on the back of his car.*) Do you suppose Nancy knows I'm here?

[ETTA, who has had enough practice for the present, rises and goes quickly to the stairs.

ETTA

I'll go tell her.

NICHOLS (*protesting*)

Oh, please—I didn't mean—I'm enjoying myself so much, really. . . .

[ETTA *continues straight on, regardless. At the top of the stairs, she meets, coming up, NANCY, who has changed to an afternoon dress.*

NANCY (*hastily to ETTA*)

The flowers for tonight have come. Bring them up here now. And you must change—*at once!* (ETTA *goes out.*) Geoffrey—do forgive me. I simply had to scrub up. Did you just arrive? (*She moves toward the portrait.*) Look! The *chef d'œuvre* is finished! Now please tell me honestly what you think of it. Isn't it enchanting? Would you believe my Maitland could do it?

[NICHOLS *is more than a little puzzled. He glances toward the stairs and proceeds to play safe.*

NICHOLS (*enthusiastically*)

Such grace of line! What a flair for color! The flesh tints are exquisite. It's simply incredible!

NANCY

Yes. There—we've done our duty! Now tell me what you *really* think.

[NICHOLS *permits himself the steady influence of a cigarette.*

NICHOLS

Well—upon my word, I don't know. It's such an extraordinary fine likeness, I suspect it's not great work. He may be merely—clever with a brush—as I'm clever with a typewriter.

NANCY (*feelingly*)

Oh—I *hope* it's not that! (*Realizes what she has said, and laughs.*) Geoffrey—you know what I mean—

NICHOLS

No—I am completely mashed.

[*They seat themselves upon the sofa.*]

NANCY (*in a business-like manner*)

Our really pressing problem now is how to sell it.

NICHOLS (*reflectively*)

If I only had a stationary home—

NANCY

That's very kind. But he wouldn't hear of it, anyway. How *does* one market pictures—do you know?

NICHOLS

Why—I suppose you get them exhibited.

NANCY

You've a nice broad back. Will you walk up and down Fifth Avenue?

NICHOLS

That *was* helpful, wasn't it?

NANCY

If only someone would want it at once.

NICHOLS

Has he done anything else?

NANCY

Just a few sketches. It was difficult, getting under way.

NICHOLS

Such a different life—quite natural. Last Autumn, I did my best to dissuade him. Frankly—how do you think he likes it?

NANCY

Oh, underneath, I think he's been very—I think he's been *happier*—

NICHOLS

Good! You know, apart from my personal interest—to me Maitland is Everyman.

NANCY

How do you mean, precisely?

NICHOLS

My gardener kept me occupied for twenty minutes this morning telling me what a splendid carpenter he would have made—and means to make still. (*He laughs shortly.*) He's sixty-three.

NANCY (*thoughtfully*)

I see. But is it the same?

NICHOLS

Maybe not.—How have *you* weathered the change?

NANCY

I've tried—oh, I've tried so hard! (*With a little shudder.*) It's shameful, the way prosperity softens one.

NICHOLS (*incredulously*)

You—?

NANCY (*nodding*)

It's a little pathetic, you know, to find you're the sort of person whose conception of a real sacrifice consists in managing with two servants, instead of five.

NICHOLS

Nonsense! Sacrifice is relative. You suffer as much from lack of luxuries, as another woman from lack of meat.

NANCY

Maybe—but it's rather disconcerting, to reach down into your—depths, and touch bottom so quickly.

NICHOLS

Maitland's not faltering, is he?

NANCY (*rising*)

No—only a trifle worried. The family budget does it—it's not precisely bulging. And today—poor dear—he's had such upsetting news—(*With a wry smile.*) Someone at a directors' table said, "Please pass the dividends."

NICHOLS

What a bore. (*Thoughtfully.*) I wonder if I couldn't—

NANCY (*with a grateful smile*)

No—he wouldn't let you. When it comes to taking help, he's stubborn as a mule—a very nice mule.

NICHOLS

But—(*A thoughtful pause. He rises and looks at*

the portrait. His face lights up.) Nancy—I've an idea! This portrait—it's really charming. Now Mrs. Carhart is having her usual drove of twenty or so up for the week-end. There are certain to be a few wealthy patrons of art among them, and—

NANCY (*excitedly*)

Geoffrey!

NICHOLS

—I'm sure that if I asked her, she'd hang it in her drawing-room. One of them might want to buy it. At any rate, they'd talk—and it would be a fair test of its worth. The only difficulty is, that if they damned it, Maitland would be so cast down that—

NANCY

You darling! Listen: he won't have to know anything about it! He's going into town on the four-fifty-one—coming out again later in the evening. . . .

NICHOLS

Yes?

NANCY

Yes.—Can't we take it over right after he goes—and have it back before nine-thirty? They'd have plenty of time to see it.

NICHOLS

I don't know why not. But—if it wasn't a go, some one of them might speak about it afterwards. . . .

NANCY

But they won't know who did it! You see—it isn't

signed! Say it's the work of an unknown painter—a protégé of Matey's—just in case—(*He turns to the portrait.*) Oh, it isn't dry yet. Suppose we had an accident with it?

NICHOLS

That's not likely—wrap it carefully. I'll drive over now and see her and come back for you about five-thirty. Then we'll—

[*There is a sound on the stairs. NANCY murmurs "Sh-h-h!" and nods an excited assent. MAITLAND enters.*

MAITLAND

What's to happen at five-thirty? I shan't be here.

NICHOLS

That's just the point. Nancy and I are going to run away together.

MAITLAND

Good! She needs a change. (*He indicates the portrait.*) Have you seen the—er—"White" . . . ?

NICHOLS

Yes, and I'm delighted with it.

MAITLAND

Isn't he nice, Nancy?

NANCY

No one has ever so endeared himself to me.

MAITLAND

I'm going to let the Metropolitan and the Luxembourg fight it out. Look here, Balzac—what do you think of this left arm?

NICHOLS

But my good Gainsborough—I find it a bit muscular!

MAITLAND

That is light, you fool, not muscle.

NICHOLS

By the way, Maitland—I've five or ten thousand that's simply mouldering away. Do you know of any trustworthy individual who'd be willing to take it on for a year or so at, say, six per cent?

MAITLAND

Why—(*He looks suspiciously at NANCY, who brazenly looks out.*)—there must be any number of them, old son. But I can't think of one just at the moment.

NICHOLS

If you hear of one, let me know. I'd consider it a favor.

MAITLAND (*slowly*)

Yes—I'll let you know.

NICHOLS

Well—I must be rolling along. The Duane's dance ahead of me—and I haven't done a line all day.

MAITLAND (*amiably*)

We artists must think of posterity, mustn't we?—See you later, anyway!

NICHOLS

Right.

NANCY

I'll go down with you.

[NICHOLS *stands aside to let her pass, and is about to follow when MAITLAND stops him.*

MAITLAND

Oh—Geoff—

NICHOLS

Yes?

MAITLAND

Thanks very much—but I really think I can manage without it.

NICHOLS

Without what?

MAITLAND (*smiling*)

The five or ten thousand at six per cent.

NICHOLS (*impatiently*)

Damn the interest, Matey!

MAITLAND

It's pretty fine of you, Geoff—but I don't think I'll need it.

NICHOLS

Well—in case you do—

[*He turns to go. MAITLAND goes to the far window and stands there, looking out. Just as NICHOLS reaches the stairs, ETTA comes in. She is in her simple gray working-dress once more, and carries a box of flowers and a water-filled vase. NICHOLS stares at her—his incredible suspicion confirmed.*

ETTA

Good-by, Mr. Nichols—

NICHOLS (*genially*)

Good-by! (He glances at MAITLAND, who is apparently oblivious, and continues.) Oh,—er—Thursday, at four.—You won't mind if I bring my sister, too? She's a charming woman.

[With a gracious bow, he goes out. ETTA begins to arrange the flowers in the vases. MAITLAND comes over to the portrait.]

MAITLAND (*absently*)

What did Mr. Nichols say?

ETTA

I'm going riding in his auto Thursday afternoon. It'll be wonderful practice. He's the funniest man!—I had a perfectly lovely talk with him before Mrs. White came in. (MAITLAND looks at her in frank amazement. Then his brow puckers reminiscently, and he suddenly sees the joke on NICHOLS. He laughs silently to himself, but ETTA is aware of nothing amiss.) I can't imagine how anyone could be much pleasanter'n Mr. Nichols.

MAITLAND (*genuinely*)

Nor I! Friends are very nice things—and sons—and wives.—And money's a nice thing, too—you know that, when you haven't any. . . . (RICKY enters from the playroom, looking very white and sick. He carries the roll of white paper—his “plans”—upon which he nervously twirls the engagement ring. At first MAITLAND does not see him.) Job gone—in-

come gone—Art's a hard mistress, Etta—she picks your bones dry—

ETTA (*the Champion*)

Oh, no, Mr. White! Art is lovely—jest lovely.

MAITLAND (*seeing RICKY*)

Hello, Rick!—Where did *you* blow from?

RICKY

Playroom. (*There is a short pause.*) Father—you might as well know—it's all off between Ronny and me.

MAITLAND

What's this?

RICKY (*with an attempt at a smile*)

Over—done—*fini*—. We aren't going to be married.

MAITLAND

But I don't understand.

RICKY

It took *me* a long while to. It was all—bogus. She wants to see you—I don't know why. Please don't cross-examine her—I think I've asked about all the questions there are—

MAITLAND

But—tonight—?

RICKY

It's too late to call off the dance, of course. We're going right ahead with it—just as if it were an—ordinary party. (*He laughs ironically.*) Not *very* different! (*He sees ETTA, who, you may be sure, is*

not missing a word.) Come on, Etta—finish those later. (ETTA goes out and RICKY turns again to MAITLAND.) Be decent to her, won't you?—She's feeling pretty sunk, herself.

[He picks up the guitar, but, as he does so, a string twangs. With a scarcely perceptible shudder, he carefully replaces it upon the trunk. RONNY appears in the playroom doorway. Her color is high, and her eyes very bright. She holds her chin up, as if by effort. For a moment their eyes meet, and RICKY contrives to smile, before he goes out, leaving her with MAITLAND.]

RONNY

Mr. White—

MAITLAND

Yes, Ronny?

RONNY

Ricky—told you?

[MAITLAND nods, not quite able to hide his scorn for this little jilt.]

MAITLAND

You find you don't love him?

RONNY (*passionately*)

Love him! Oh—if a year ago someone had told me that I'd ever love anyone as I love Rick now, I'd have—I'd have—

[She cannot go on.]

MAITLAND

Then I fail to see why you've—

RONNY

I'll tell you why!—If I told *him*, he'd just laugh me out of it. Give me your word no one else shall know—no one at all—

MAITLAND (*after a pause*)

Very well—my word.

RONNY

I'm between Ricky and the thing he wants to do. That's plain. If I don't marry him, he'll go abroad and study as he should. (*Her hand falls upon his arm.*) You know what it means to him. You know he *must* be what he's cut out to be!

MAITLAND

You dear child—

[*He picks up her hand and touches his lips to it. She takes it from him at once.*]

RONNY (*in pain*)

Oh—please—that's Ricky's trick!

MAITLAND

You're very brave, Ronny, and very fine—(*She shakes her head violently.*)—but we can't afford to send him abroad, now.

[*RONNY straightens up, puzzled and shocked.*]

RONNY

Wha-a-a-t . . . ?

MAITLAND

I am not a rich man. I depended largely upon my salary. It stopped when I left business.

RONNY

But you've *something*—and I only need half of what I have a year. Take the other half—put it with whatever *you* can. I'd be happier—*much*.

MAITLAND

My dear. But there's been bad news, you see. I've almost nothing, now—not even enough for Nancy and me.

RONNY (*cruelly*)

Then why don't you go back to business?
[MAITLAND *flinches, in spite of himself*.

MAITLAND

One has—certain obligations to oneself, you know.
[RONNY *squares off*.

RONNY

I've just taken my heart and (*with a gesture of breaking it between her hands*.) done *that* with it. For him—for my Ricky! And you can stand there talking about yourself! Aren't you his father? Aren't you responsible for him?

MAITLAND (*genuinely moved, but smiling a little*)

You are telling me I've—given hostages to Fortune?

RONNY (*impatiently*)

I don't know anything about "hostages." I just know that there's something big in Ricky, that's got to come out. You can help him—and because you *can*, you *must*. He's your son—you've let yourself in for it!

[*This is too much; MAITLAND's spirit is up at last.*]

MAITLAND

Listen to me: your reasoning's very bad. You say I'm responsible for Ricky. All right—I'm responsible for bringing him out of nowhere into a very lively, very interesting world—for giving him twenty-two years of every advantage a boy can have. Now why shouldn't I think of myself for awhile?

RONNY

When all that time you've been teaching him to love something, aren't you bound to stick by him till he shows what he can make of it?

MAITLAND

He had his chance.

RONNY

And now that it's gone, must he wait till he's—forty or so—for another?

[*This shot tells.*]

MAITLAND (*doggedly*)

Why not?—That's what *I* did.

RONNY

So—you want everything to be for him—just as it's been for you—

MAITLAND (*sharply*)

Please! Please!

RONNY

Only *you* had Mrs. White in its place. He'd have nothing: I'd feel like a thief. You're *used* to doing

what you don't want to do. He's not. He'd be just—empty.

MAITLAND

He can quit now, and do what he wants on his own.

RONNY

—And so he would! But could he go abroad? Could he be all he *might* be?

MAITLAND

That's up to him.

RONNY

It's up to—! Oh, we *can't* argue, can we? What makes my reasons right for me, is just what makes them wrong for you.

MAITLAND

That's the old and the young of it, Ronny.

RONNY (*swiftly*)

But there's one thing we're the same about: both of us love Ricky. What you won't do for duty, you *will* do for love!

MAITLAND (*with a gesture toward his painting*)

Do you know how I love this?

RONNY

Not half so much as Ricky! He's your *son*. He'll come first!

MAITLAND (*a moment. Then:*)

You haven't convinced me, Ronny. But you've reminded me that there's a very cruel law that rules most men's destinies.

RONNY

—Not only *men's!*

[*She shuts her eyes in pain, swallows hard, shakes her hand as if to shake something out of it, and then raises her chin sharply. NANCY appears at the top of the stairs, carrying a large piece of brown wrapping-paper and a ball of cord.*

NANCY

Matey—your train.

[*RONNY wheels about and confronts NANCY. For a moment, you feel that she is about to attack her as she attacked MAITLAND. But when her voice is heard it is the voice of a very sad child, trying her best to be spunky to the end.*

RONNY

Are you doing anything special Monday morning?

NANCY (*puzzled*)

Why, no. Why?

RONNY

If I may, I want to come over—

NANCY

Do.

RONNY

—and cry on your shoulder.

NANCY

But what has happened, Ronny?

[*RONNY flings her final words over her shoulder as she goes down the stairs:*

RONNY

I'll be in about eleven!

NANCY (*bewildered, looks after her for a moment and then turns to MAITLAND*)

Maitland—what is it?

MAITLAND (*grimly*)

A joke on me—one of fate's funniest. (*He moves toward the stairs, shaking his head and laughing softly and bitterly.*) Laugh, my dear—have a real good laugh at me, because it couldn't be funnier—not possibly funnier—

[*He goes out, and NANCY is left gazing after him.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

It is shortly after nine, the same evening, and the studio is unlighted, save for the bright moonlight which flows through the great dormer-window upon the empty easel. Through this window a string of Japanese lanterns is seen, glowing in the dim distance.

There is a sound at the stairs. NANCY enters, and moves quickly to the long table, fumbles for a match, scratches it, and begins to light the candles in the candlesticks which now stand upon the table.

The increasing light shows that the twelve chairs at the table have been hastily pulled back, and that the table has not yet been entirely cleared. The dappled-gray hobby-horse has been brought from its hiding-place, and upon it sits "Genevieve," a paper cap upon her head.

NANCY is dressed as a Spanish Lady. She wears a black dress, a lace mantilla of black shot through with jade green, earrings, beads, bracelets, and a jade comb in her hair, which is worn high, in the Spanish fashion.

As she lights the candles, a heavy, halting step is heard upon the stairs. She seizes one of the candlesticks, and going to the stairway, holds it high above her head, to light the entrance.

NANCY

Geoff—do hurry! (Still the very slow, heavy steps continue. NANCY becomes impatient.) Do you want him to come in and find us? (The steps continue

at the same speed.) Be careful at the corner! (*A silence. Then the steps begin again, slower than before. NANCY is vexed.*) Oh—I know you'll rip it to shreds! (*A pause, then suddenly the steps begin to race. NANCY leaps back, and the tip of the portrait, wrapped in brown paper, appears, and behind it NICHOLS, who enters as if he had been hurled by a catapult. He wears a Pierrot costume of black and silver, a black skull-cap, and an enormous white ruff at his neck.*) Useless person—utterly—

NICHOLS

Useless! Three flights of stairs without a mishap—and she calls me useless!

[Together they remove the paper and a protecting frame from the portrait, which NICHOLS replaces upon the easel. NANCY folds the paper, ties string around it, and conceals it and the frame.]

NANCY

Do you really think there's a chance?

[NICHOLS extracts a watch with great difficulty from somewhere within his clothes.]

NICHOLS

Mrs. Carhart sent word that she'd telephone me here before nine-thirty. (*He looks at the watch.*) Sixteen past. By a lightning calculation, fourteen minutes left.

NANCY (*seating herself at the table*)

I wonder who it could be.

NICHOLS

I can't imagine.

NANCY

But whom was she having up?

NICHOLS

She expected the Graysons, and the Hoyts—

NANCY

Wait a minute!

[She takes down the names, writing with a crayon upon a piece of MAITLAND'S sketching-paper.]

NICHOLS

—And the Crams, and Reggie de Courcy—

NANCY

Wretched little worm. Tony Cram must be blind.

NICHOLS

And the Webbs, and Gregory Kendall—

NANCY

It might be Kendall! Wouldn't that be luck?

NICHOLS

I doubt if it's Greg. He once dined with Whistler.
—And the Warrens—

NANCY

The G. T.'s—?

NICHOLS

Yes—they're not staying there. They just came in with some other people for dinner.

NANCY

Well—we can cross *them* out. Go on.

NICHOLS

And Mrs.—what's her name—Parkerson—

NANCY

The front-page Parkerson?

NICHOLS

Herself.

NANCY (*with a grimace*)

Me-aow! Who else?

NICHOLS

Burke McAllister, and the David Ewings. . . .

NANCY

Precious, fat old things! *They* might—

NICHOLS

It'd be a great feather for Matey, if he made their November Loan Exhibition.

NANCY

They're the ones!—It's come to me in a vision!—
Is that all—?

NICHOLS

So far as I remember.

NANCY

Perhaps three or four of them will simply battle for it. You referee, Geoff.—(*Thoughtfully.*)—And perhaps no one will want it at all. And what will my Matey do then, poor thing? (*Dropping her head upon her hand.*) Oh—I'm too old to be as excited as this over anything! What *can* be keeping him? (*She goes to the window and looks out.*) See the lan-

terns strung through the orchard at the Duanes'. They look like plums and oranges, come suddenly to life. Ricky—the lamb—he was such a corker at dinner. He kept them in perfect gales of laughter—just as if nothing had happened at all. Oh—that wretched girl.

NICHOLS

Odd—her tacking about this way, at the last minute. Simple funk, perhaps.

NANCY

Nonsense! She dives twenty feet, without turning a hair.

NICHOLS

I could dive forty—before I could marry.

NANCY

What time is it now?—Come here—let's go over this again—

[NICHOLS *makes a movement to take out his watch, then remembers what a task it is, and desists, settling himself back comfortably in a chair, instead.*

NICHOLS

—Just nine-twenty-one.

[MAITLAND *comes in.* NANCY *conceals the list.*

NANCY

Hello, Matey! I thought you'd never come.

MAITLAND

So did I. That train was more than usually local. My dear—how charming you look.

NANCY

I am a product of Southern Spain, where men are men—and women, minxes.

NICHOLS

Three guesses what I am.

[ETTA comes in.

ETTA (*to* NICHOLS)

There's a telephone call for you.

[NANCY starts, and then sets about concealing her excitement.

NICHOLS

Thank you, Etta.

ETTA (*shyly*)

You're welcome, Geoffrey.

[NICHOLS accelerates his exit, and ETTA turns to follow him. NANCY, with an effort, avoids the laughter that has overcome MAITLAND, and calls to her.

NANCY

Etta—

ETTA (*turning*)

Yes, Ma'am—

NANCY (*after a pause*)

Er—never mind. . . . (ETTA goes out. NANCY and MAITLAND seat themselves upon the sofa. MAITLAND still laughs.) I can't rebuke the girl. Maitland—you shouldn't fool with people's souls, that way. She's miles above domestic service now. We must do something about her.

MAITLAND (*seriously*)

Um. I know we must—

NANCY

It's a nice idea, though—

MAITLAND

What?

NANCY

—That in creating the portrait of a lady, you may have created a lady as well. (*She glances toward the stairs and continues nervously.*) How did you find things in town?

MAITLAND

Pretty bad. It took another slump today. I told Hubbard to sell five hundred shares at ten o'clock Monday. There's no use grouching over it, I suppose.

NANCY

Not the slightest. Let's forget it till we *have* to think—

MAITLAND

That's been our method with most disagreeable things, hasn't it?

NANCY

Um.

MAITLAND

—And we've marched along pretty damn splendidly, haven't we?

NANCY (*nodding*)

I'm so glad contentment hasn't caught us—and

wrapped us in cotton-wool. We'll never be quite content, you and I.—So we'll never be dead until they shut our eyes, and fold our hands.

MAITLAND

And even then I dare say our spirits will go on poking about the heavenly shrubbery—looking for birds that may be there!

NANCY

Darling—it's the way to live! (*Another furtive glance at the stairs.*)—But it plays simple havoc with your nerves. . . . (*Suddenly.*) Matey—tell me you love me.

MAITLAND

Child! I abominate you.

NANCY

Ah—very satisfactory.

MAITLAND

I telephoned Greg Kendall from the Club, but they said he was in the country. I've concluded that the thing to do with the portrait, is to get an exhibition.

NANCY (*keeping her voice steady*)

Kendall might even want it himself.

MAITLAND

I doubt it. But he often acts as an agent, you know.

NANCY (*airily*)

Would you like Mr. Ewing to have it?

MAITLAND

Oh, no—not at all! Be hung along with Goya and El Greco? My dear—such ignominy!—How did the the supper go?

NANCY

Delightfully—for all but the three of us who knew. (*She shakes her head sadly.*) Ricky would have broken your heart.

MAITLAND

—He didn't sulk?!

NANCY

Maitland!—Our boy *sulk*? He was splendid!

MAITLAND

I was certain of it.

NANCY

That girl! I don't see how she dares—

MAITLAND

Nancy—if only I could tell you.—Ronny—
[*He is interrupted by NICHOLS' entrance. NANCY goes to him quickly, and in the recess of the stairway, they whisper together excitedly.*]

NICHOLS

Ssss-s-s-s—pss-sssh—pscpssch—

NANCY

Not *really*!—But I never *heard* of anything so remarkable!

MAITLAND (*approaching them*)

Here—what's this?

NANCY (*motioning to him behind her back*)

Go away!

[*They whisper more earnestly. MAITLAND returns to the sofa.*]

MAITLAND

What *have* you two got up your sleeves?

NICHOLS (*over NANCY'S shoulder*)

A white rabbit, now. It *was* a white elephant. (MAITLAND *picks up a magazine and begins to look it over. NANCY and NICHOLS join hands, and keeping perfect step, march over to a position in front of MAITLAND.*)

MAITLAND (*speaks to them indulgently.*)

Yes, my little ones—what can I do for you?

NANCY (*at once timid and exultant*)

Maitland—Geoff and I have something to tell you—

MAITLAND (*quite unimpressed*)

Fancy that, now.

[NANCY *turns imploringly to NICHOLS.*]

NANCY

I *won't* have my biggest moment ruined by such crass stupidity.

NICHOLS

Really, old son—we've three columns of news.

MAITLAND

Um.—Newspapers bore me.

NANCY (*in desperation*)

Matey—we've sold your picture!

NICHOLS

Not quite *sold*, but—

NANCY

At any rate, we've got an offer for it.

MAITLAND

Well, well—isn't that nice? (*He sighs.*) Come on—we might as well get it over with: Who has made the offer?

[NANCY *appeals to* NICHOLS. *He laughs.*

NICHOLS

The truth is, that we don't *know* who!

MAITLAND

I shouldn't have spoiled it. Make it a good one: The—er—Corcoran Gallery—or the Vatican—(*Yawning and settling back.*) What tiresome people. (NANCY *determinedly takes him by both ears, shakes his head, and literally lifts him to his feet.*) Here!—Let go!

NANCY

Maitland! Will you listen? I tell you we're serious! [MAITLAND *looks at* NICHOLS, *who solemnly raises his right hand.*

NICHOLS

By the bones of my ancestors!

[MAITLAND, *dumbfounded, looks from one to the other.*

MAITLAND

Well, of— I'll be— *tell* me about it—quick!

NANCY (*eagerly*)

It was Geoff's plan. He gets the credit.

NICHOLS

It was just as much yours as mine.

NANCY

But *Geoffrey*—you *know* you—

MAITLAND (*impatiently*)

Honors are even! Come on—*what*—?

NANCY (*very rapidly*)

Well—we took the portrait over to Mrs. Carhart's. Geoff had arranged with her to hang it in her drawing-room, and show it to everyone before dinner—said it was by a protégé of yours. Then, just before you arrived, her chauffeur brought it back, and with it a message saying that she'd telephone before nine-thirty. That was Geoff's call, and—

MAITLAND (*confused*)

But—*who*—?

NICHOLS

That's what we don't know. It was her butler who telephoned. He said she was sending the—prospective purchaser here to see me now.

NANCY

—And it's probably either Kendall or the Ewings! They were both there. And it's an out-and-out offer—

NICHOLS

A handsome one, Matey—four thousand dollars.

MAITLAND

Four thousand dollars—for the work of an unknown modern?

NICHOLS

I made him repeat it three times. Not, of course, that I doubted its worth.

MAITLAND

Oh, no—certainly not—of course not. But—(*In sudden buoyancy.*) Lord!—He must have *liked* it, mustn't he? (*He gathers NANCY to his side with one sweep of his arm, and grasps NICHOLS' hand.*) Oh—you great good people! I wouldn't trade you for any other two on earth! (*He goes to the portrait.*) Geoff—bring a candle over, will you?

NANCY

No—let me!

[*She picks up a candlestick, and holds it up to light the portrait. MAITLAND dips his brush.*]

MAITLAND

Now for the great ceremony—anonymity farewell!

NANCY (*reluctantly*)

I wonder if we aren't being—a little—previous?

MAITLAND (*with his brush poised*)

Why? (*To NICHOLS.*) Didn't you say it was definite?

NICHOLS

It seemed so to me.

NANCY

But—there might be a slip—'twixt the offer—and the cheque.

MAITLAND (*hesitating*)

I wonder—what do you think, Geoff?

NICHOLS

He'll be here in a moment. Why not wait?

MAITLAND

I bow to your good judgment. I'll sign it under his very nose.

NICHOLS (*suddenly*)

I'm going to give up my popular writing, and see if I can't do one thing I'm not ashamed of—

MAITLAND

Fine!—Of *course* you can!

NICHOLS

I don't know. You jilted your art, but I did worse. I sent mine on the streets. She's not a forgiving lady.

MAITLAND (*in high spirits*)

Not forgiving?—When she came back to me after years of neglect? Try her! Try her!—Now tell me: who else saw it?

NANCY

I have a list right here—

NICHOLS

I cling doggedly to a belief that it may be Mrs. Parkerson.

MAITLAND

I hear she has some beautiful things.

NICHOLS

—And she likes new people.

NANCY

Matey—I *won't* let that woman have it!

MAITLAND (*good-humoredly*)

Not even for four thousand dollars?

NANCY

Not for twenty!

[MAITLAND *draws a line and wafts a kiss to the dreadful woman.*

MAITLAND

Au 'voir, Mrs. Parkerson. We thank you for your kindly interest—but our prig of a wife objects to you. (*He reads over the names.*) Of course—it might be any one of these—with two or three exceptions.

NANCY

How I do hope that—(*She hesitates, troubled.*) It's almost too ideal, to be altogether true.

MAITLAND

Nancy—you haven't been—playing some joke on me?

NANCY

As if I could—in a thing like this! (*Again, apprehensively.*) But—I mean—it seems so—so timely—so—pat to our needs.

[RICKY *comes in, in a Troubadour costume, but without the guitar.*

MAITLAND

Still—if he definitely said—well, Rick, you look positively dashing.

RICKY

Keep your seats; the chorus will be right in. (*He sees "Genevieve" on the hobby-horse.*) I see the Lady Godiva still rides. Hi, Mr. Nichols!

NICHOLS

Hello, Ricky. (*To MAITLAND.*) Don't you think I'd better go down and wait for—whoever it is?

NANCY

By all means. I'll go with you.

RICKY

Stick around a minute, will you, Nancy?

NANCY

I'll be with you presently, Geoff.

NICHOLS (*going out*)

Right.

RICKY (*to NANCY*)

Ronny is downstairs. She wants to talk to you.

NANCY

I—don't think I care to see her now.

RICKY

Off that, Dearest. If Ronny wants to change her mind, why that's her privilege. I'll expect you to be just as nice to her as you possibly can be. And by that, I don't mean any of your well-known politeness at ten below zero.

MAITLAND

I haven't yet told you how sorry I am about this.

RICKY (*smiling*)

Oh—it's not everyone has *your* luck getting married.

NANCY

Come here, Rick—(*He goes to her and she takes his face between her hands and kisses him.*) Tell Ronny to come up—

[*RICKY hugs her, drops his head upon her shoulder for a moment, and then looks up, smiling brightly.*]

RICKY

Thanks—thanks *very* much.

[*He goes out.*]

NANCY

Matey—he makes me ache all over.

MAITLAND

Our own good fortune seems nothing when I think of it.

NANCY

He'll get over it, of course—they always do. But a thing like this takes the sweetness out of a boy. It hardens him—makes him shrewd—metallic—(*She exclaims in pain.*) Oh—the poor darling! (*Flaming into anger against RONNY.*)—And all along I've thought that Ronny's air of inconsequence was merely an overlay—to many things fine, and true—

MAITLAND

My dear—it *is*—

NANCY

This looks it, doesn't it—this parody of love!

MAITLAND

—It's hardly that, Nancy.—And you must be very careful with her.

NANCY (*coldly*)

—And why should I be?

[RONNY enters by the stairs. She wears a long dress of peacock-blue satin, brocaded with silver, a silver girdle and silver slippers. Binding her hair is a slim bandeau of pearls. It is the costume of a Seventeenth Century court. She looks older—a charming girl of, say twenty-six. She crosses a few steps from the top of the stairs, and stops.]

MAITLAND

Van Dyck might have painted you.

RONNY

I wish he had. I'd like it better if I were—just stuck up somewhere. (*To NANCY.*) I hadn't a chance at dinner—I wanted to be sure that—you weren't hating me too much—

NANCY

I'm afraid I am very old-fashioned. Forgive me—but I find it difficult to regard jilting with anything but—distaste.

MAITLAND (*an entreaty*)

Ronny—?

RONNY

All right—only Ricky mustn't know.

MAITLAND (*to NANCY*)

Ronny told me something this afternoon—she told me a number of things. One of them was the motive for what she has done. She loves him very much. Rightly or wrongly, she felt that she was keeping him from the thing—from a perhaps notable career. So she broke her engagement, and gave him a trumped-up reason for it.

NANCY (*incredulously*)

She could do *that*?!—When I—? Oh—

[*She stands with her head bowed, one hand resting upon the table.*

MAITLAND (*he must say something*)

No doubt she's placed too much importance upon it. She's—

[NANCY *turns to* RONNY.

NANCY

Ronny—I think I am one of the rare mothers who consider the girl a son loves, really good enough for him.

RONNY (*barely audible*)

You're very kind. But—

NANCY (*with a gesture asking her to come to her*)

Please—(RONNY *crosses, and NANCY takes her hand.*)
You make me feel very little. You are doing something that I, years ago, hadn't the courage to do.
[RONNY *looks from her to MAITLAND, then realizes what she means.*

RONNY

Oh—it's not at all the same, you know.

NANCY

I think it is very much the same—(*Pause.*) But—I don't know what to advise you. I've—had a happy life, my dear.

MAITLAND

—And so have I, Ronny—a very happy one.
[NANCY *glances at him, gratefully.*]

NANCY

It's—doubtful now, whether we *could* send Ricky abroad—(RONNY *looks at* MAITLAND, *who looks away.*)—even if he would consent to go. And it may be that you and your love could mean—

MAITLAND

—Could mean—much more than anything else could, without them.

RONNY (*quietly*)

—As I see it, that's not the point.

MAITLAND

But the more I think of it, the more certain I am that—

RONNY

It's no good arguing, Mr. White. I'm sure I'm right.

NANCY

You've told your mother?

RONNY

—That it was off? Yes. I've told both of them. Father won't speak to me, and I left Mother eating aspirin tablets. (*She laughs shortly.*) It's a great life.

NANCY

I only hope you're not making a mistake.

RONNY

It's not a mistake. Not if Ricky is started right.
[*Again MAITLAND looks away.*]

NANCY

I'm afraid we couldn't afford—what do you think, Maitland?

[*RONNY holds MAITLAND's eyes for a long instant. Slowly he shifts his gaze to NANCY.*]

MAITLAND (*with difficulty*)

It—doesn't seem likely—no.

RONNY (*after a pause*)

Then at least he can go into an architects' office—you must insist on that.

NANCY

—And perhaps turn out to be merely—clever with a ruler? No—he might better stay in business.

RONNY

Then—(*Almost breaking.*) Oh—just because last Autumn I was a selfish, short-sighted little fool, is this all to be useless now?

[*She looks at MAITLAND, and after a moment he turns and meets her gaze without flinching.*]

MAITLAND

—One thing's certain: If Ricky is to do it at all, he must have the best training possible.

RONNY

I knew you'd think that. You're not the kind of per-

son who lets himself in for something and then—

MAITLAND (*interrupting*)

Happily, I've just had some rather good news about my painting. And—

RONNY

Oh—I'm *so* glad!

[MAITLAND *smiles his thanks.*

MAITLAND

—And it's possible that the success of this particular piece may make my future work even more profitable.

RONNY (*her eyes shining*)

Then—everything's all right for *both* of you, isn't it?

MAITLAND

That's what I'm hoping.—So I think you may be confident that your very fine and generous sacrif—

RONNY (*swiftly*)

Please don't say "sacrifice." It's not one—not if Ricky comes through as I know he will.

MAITLAND

—At any rate, what you have done will not—go for nothing.

RONNY (*lowly*)

That's good of you. Thanks— I'm—satisfied now. (*She turns.*) I'd better go back—the people have started to dribble in for the dancing.

MAITLAND

Will you tell Ricky I should like to see him here in about half an hour?

RONNY (*lifelessly*)

I'll tell him. (*She begins to move toward the stairs. Reaching NANCY, she turns impulsively, and buries her head in her shoulder.*)—And I thought love all just a happy lark!

NANCY (*tenderly, as she pats her head*)

Not all, dear.

[RONNY *smiles much as RICKY did and straightens up quickly.*

RONNY

Not—any—

[*There is a sound from the stairs and WARREN's voice is heard.*

WARREN (*with difficulty*)

Is there any top?—Or—do we—just—keep going—?

NICHOLS (*cheerily*)

Push on, Brave Heart—push on!

MAITLAND (*lowly, to NANCY*)

Lord—I forgot Rick said G. T. was up here. I'll take him downstairs. Geoff should have known. (*He quickly moves the easel back into the shadow, and covers the paint-table with a scarf, which he snatches from a chair. The sound draws closer, and RONNY steps back to let WARREN and NICHOLS enter. WARREN wears a dinner-coat, and looks quite exhausted.*)

Hello, G. T. I heard you were somewhere in the neighborhood.

[*They shake hands, blocking RONNY's exit.*]

WARREN (*breathlessly*)

H'lo—White—(*He looks around for a chair and finding none near by, sits upon a trunk.*) I'd—no idea—your house—was so tall—

NANCY

How do you do, Mr. Warren? It's so long since we've had this pleasure.

WARREN

How-do-do, Mrs. White. I expected—Saint Peter.

MAITLAND

I think we'd be more comfortable downstairs.

WARREN

Maybe we would. But—now that—I'm up—here—(*Taking a deep breath.*)—I'm going—to sit down—long enough—to—make it pay.

[*He sees RONNY, and rises.*]

RONNY

How do you do?

[WARREN *looks puzzled at first, then beams and shakes hands with her.*]

WARREN

Why—bless my soul—it's Miss—Miss Duane, isn't it? My, how pretty you look—just like a picture. Your young man is doing very well for me. I—er—understand the secret's coming out tonight. Let me

be among the first to congratulate you.—He's a fine boy.

RONNY (*glancing furtively toward the stairs*)

Thank you so much.

MAITLAND (*to save the situation*)

G. T.—

WARREN (*going right on*)

—Yes, a wife's the best thing in the world for a young man, if he can afford one—(*He chuckles.*)—
—and I'll see to it that *you* two don't starve right away. (*And continues talking to her, while looking at MAITLAND. RONNY quietly slips out.*) Expect big things of Ricky. I don't doubt that some day he'll be more valuable to me than his father ever thought of being.—And I once thought White indispensable! Well—I mustn't keep you too long. I wish you every happiness—(*Turning about slowly.*)—my dear. And I'm sure—(*He sees that she is not there, and laughs.*) Well!—that's one on me!

MAITLAND

G. T.—there are two or three things I'd like to mull over with you. Let's go down to the library. We can talk better there. I'm expecting a caller, but he won't keep me long.

[WARREN *goes to the sofa*, MAITLAND *watching him anxiously*. NICHOLS *goes to the window and stands there silently looking out, weaving his fingers in and out behind him.*

WARREN

I don't see anything wrong with this—very comfort-

able here—very pleasant. (*He seats himself and his long pent-up curiosity finally breaks through.*)
White—what on earth've you been doing with yourself?

MAITLAND

Oh—resting—and indulging a few neglected tastes.
[WARREN *looks to* NANCY *for corroboration.*]

NANCY

You said he needed a rest, you know.

WARREN

Eight months of it?—It's not resting after the first six weeks. It's rotting. Well, I'm not here to talk vacations.

[NANCY'S *hand flies to her mouth in sudden consternation. Then she turns quickly and looks at* NICHOLS. *He crosses to them.*]

NICHOLS

Oh, yes—Mr. Warren saw the portrait, Maitland—
[*Dance music begins to be heard faintly, from the Duane's.*]

MAITLAND (*easily*)

That's right—you were at the Carharts', weren't you? Amusing chap—this protégé of mine. A bit erratic, of course—you know painters. . . .

WARREN

Um.

MAITLAND

Oh—by the way—did you hear Ewing or Kendall say anything about coming over?

WARREN

—Here?—No. And listen—those fellows make me tired. You should have heard them pulling your friend's picture to pieces. All about "dim cherry-uskuro" and "flat composition"—and all that highbrow rot. Blind as bats—both of 'em! Missing the greatest thing about it! (*Leaning forward, and tapping MAITLAND's knee confidentially with his forefinger.*) White—I want to tell you that that picture has Human Interest Appeal!

MAITLAND (*bravely*)

You—found it interesting?

WARREN

Enough to pay four thousand dollars for it!

NANCY (*quietly*)

You—are you telling us that you are the prospective purchaser, Mr. Warren?

[NICHOLS returns to the window. MAITLAND nods his head reflectively, staring at the floor.]

MAITLAND

H'm—very generous offer, very—

WARREN (*simultaneously*)

You bet I am!—Why, it's the sweetest face I ever saw! (*He rises and crosses to the easel.*) This it?—Ah—if that doesn't give trumps to all the Old Masters I've ever seen—

[*He gazes at the portrait with a rapt expression. MAITLAND brings himself heavily to his feet, NANCY edges closer to him, watching him.*]

MAITLAND

You say—Kendall and Ewing and the others—didn't think so much of it?

[NANCY *is at his side.*

WARREN (*snorting*)

Bah—they make me sick!

MAITLAND (*very softly*)

They make *me*—a little sick. . . .

[NANCY *grasps his hand behind his back, and presses it as tightly as she can, as WARREN moves the easel around to get the full light upon the face.*

WARREN

But that didn't change *my* opinion! No sir!—if you discovered this, I'm tremendously indebted to you.

MAITLAND (*dully*)

Oh—not at all—

WARREN

But I tell you it's just what I've been after for years! It's the most perfect type you could ask for!

[MAITLAND *wheels about, suddenly.*

MAITLAND

Type—? Perfect—? What *for*—?

WARREN (*triumphantly*)

Why—to personify the Warren Line of Beauty Accessories. What else?

NANCY

Oh—this is unthinkable!

[WARREN *looks at her, surprised. He has not caught the words, but the tone was unmistakable.* MAITLAND *drops his hand upon her shoulder, removing it in an instant.*

MAITLAND

Just a minute, dear. (*To WARREN.*) Let me get this straight.—Precisely why is it that you want the picture?

WARREN

Advertising, man, advertising!—What did you think?

[MAITLAND's *head sinks.*

MAITLAND

I—*didn't*—

WARREN

Why—you ought to be delighted. Haven't you been howling for years for a big national campaign? And haven't I been holding out till I could find a way of putting the whole line over as a unit? Well, your dream's coming true—and so's mine—(*Tapping the shoulder of the portrait.*)—And we owe it all to this little lady right here.

MAITLAND

Ah—this is Fame!

WARREN

You're right it is!

NICHOLS (*to MAITLAND*)

Millais once did a painting for Pears' Soap, you know. . . .

MAITLAND

Thanks, Geoff.

WARREN

Look!—Can't you just *see* it with "The Warren Line is Purity Itself" written in nine-point script across the bottom?

MAITLAND

—Instead of the painter's signature. Yes—I can see it. (*He turns and regards WARREN speculatively.*) G. T.—you're not aware of it—but in a way you're—uncannily like God.

[NANCY'S head drops upon her breast, NICHOLS abruptly returns to the window. The music at the Duane's stops, and the faint sound of laughter is heard.]

WARREN (*after a pause. Surprised, then amused*)

Me—? God—? Ho! Ho!—Thanks for the compliment. (*Again contemplating the picture.*) I wonder if it wouldn't be better to put something in her hand. Our Art Department could retouch it in—a bunch of flowers—or a can of talcum, say—

NANCY (*quietly*)

I think, Mr. Warren, that its great charm is its—refreshing freedom from artifice—

WARREN

Well—you ought to know. You're a woman—and it's women we want to reach. (*To MAITLAND.*) Shall I make the cheque out to you?

MAITLAND

You'd better wait. The—painter may not care to have it used for advertising purposes. I'll let you know Monday.

WARREN (*laughing*)

What?—Temperament? (*He goes to the table and writes a cheque.*) Wave this under his nose. If he's as poor as most painters, he'll soon forget his highly-tighty notions.—And tell him I want to see him about doing two or three more, in different poses, at the same price.

MAITLAND (*directly*)

That, I am certain he will not consent to.

NANCY (*softly*)

Ah—you *brick!*

NICHOLS (*simultaneously*)

Bravo!

WARREN (*to NANCY*)

What's that?

NANCY

I was speaking to my husband.

WARREN

Oh. (*ETTA enters with a note for MAITLAND. WARREN leaves the cheque on the table, and rises.*) You watch—he'll come around. He'll—

MAITLAND

It is—the *face* you like, isn't it?

WARREN

Certainly. I don't know anything about the technique, or whatever you call it.

[ETTA *passes* WARREN, *unnoticed by him*.

MAITLAND

I think perhaps we—can find the model—and some proficient—commercial artist can do her in the other poses.

WARREN

That suits me.—Say now—before I go—there's one more thing—

ETTA (*giving* MAITLAND *the envelope*)

A message for you, sir—and thank you, sir.

MAITLAND (*gravely*)

All right, Etta.

[ETTA *joyfully turns to go out*.

WARREN (*continuing*)

I'm not too well pleased with the way the Chicago—
(*As she passes* WARREN, *ETTA looks up at him. He stops speaking abruptly, and his mouth drops open in amazement. He turns and watches her as she goes out. He looks again at the portrait, then wheels about quickly, and explodes:*) White—there's something damn queer about this whole thing. Did you paint this picture?

MAITLAND (*smiling*)

G. T.!—Imagine me an artist!

WARREN (*His face suddenly lighting up in complete understanding*)

Now I see it! *That's* why you left! You knew we had

to advertise. You knew I couldn't find what I wanted. So you got a big idea—worked it out by yourself—and then sprang it on me! What a fellow you are!

MAITLAND

It's a pretty explanation,—but quite erroneous, quite—

NICHOLS

Oh, agree with him, Maitland—what's the odds?

MAITLAND

You're quite wrong—

WARREN

Damn it, right *or* wrong, I want you back. And now that I've O.K.'d your advertising plans, you ought to be on hand to manage 'em.—Well, what do you say?

MAITLAND

I don't know. I'll—tell you that on Monday, too. (*Thoughtfully.*) If I should come back—would you agree to my having Fridays and Saturdays free the entire year round—to devote to a—shall we say a hobby of mine?

WARREN

Absolutely!

MAITLAND

I'll think it over, and let you know.

WARREN (*tapping the portrait*)

Have this sent to me, will you?

MAITLAND

If the artist agrees. Your house?

WARREN

No—right to the office.—And you ought to shake up that Chicago crowd, and shake 'em up good! You could leave Wednesday and be back by the first of the week.

MAITLAND (*reflectively*)

I'd have a lot to tell those fellows.

WARREN

I'll bet you would!

NANCY (*alarmed*)

But didn't you say that week-ends were to be free?

WARREN

Oh, occasionally it may be necessary to—(*With a gesture.*) Business is business, you know.

NANCY (*softly*)

So it is.

WARREN

Well—I'll be going along. Good-night, Mrs. White.

NANCY

Good-night.

WARREN (*to MAITLAND*)

I'll expect to hear from you Monday. There's no need to come down with me.

NICHOLS (*crossing from the window*)

No—let me—

[*As he passes MAITLAND, he stops and looks at him searchingly.*

WARREN (*on the stairs*)

Good-bye! Good-bye, Mr.—uh—uh—Good-bye!

[*He goes out.*

MAITLAND (*with a smile*)

No, Geoff—not done yet!

NICHOLS

It's a rotten shame—I know what it's like—

[*He follows WARREN down the stairs. MAITLAND tears open the envelope and extracts the note. NANCY goes to him.*

MAITLAND

Something of a facer, isn't it?

NANCY

Oh, Matey—be careful, be careful! Don't do anything till you're sure that you're right.

MAITLAND

No, dear. (*Turning to the signature of the note.*)

H'm—from Greg Kendall—

NANCY (*eagerly*)

Oh—what does he say?

[MAITLAND *frowns over the writing.*

MAITLAND

“Ewing and I—home—a lovely—” (*He gives it to her.*) Can you make it out?

NANCY (*reading slowly*)

“Ewing and I have had a lively discussion concerning

the portrait painted by your protégé. Ewing insists that—”

[She stops and looks at him fearfully.]

MAITLAND (*grimly*)

Let's have it.

NANCY

“Ewing insists that it is of no consequence, but I cannot bring myself wholly to agree with him. . . .”
(*Delightedly.*) Matey!

MAITLAND

Crumbs are good.

NANCY (*continuing*)

“I find the technique above average, and the brush-work distinctly promising. My main objections hang upon a certain inflexibility in treatment. We do not expect a painter's early work to be individual, but such rigidity is as ominous as it is uncommon. (*She turns the page.*)—Unless your young friend is content with a place in the ranks of the agreeably mediocre, he should devote the next three or four years to the most painstaking study under a good European master. This may, or may not, be his salvation.”

MAITLAND (*staring straight in front of him*)

—And there's not a better judge I know, than Kendall!

NANCY

No?

MAITLAND

—Nor a fairer one.—But it doesn't convince me—

do you understand? Not by half! Ah—how I'd like to show them!

NANCY

You will—I'm sure you will.

MAITLAND (*grasping at the straw*)

—He did like my brush-work. You see?—That's very important.—Now if I should get someone in town to teach me—

NANCY

You—who have just said “If he's to do it at all, he must have the best training possible”—?

[*He looks at her oddly.*]

MAITLAND (*half to himself*)

Which of us—

NANCY

You're not one to do things by halves. Why not go abroad, as Kendall advises? *I* shan't mind—and it's no one else's business. Rick can support himself. I've still enough for Jean and me. And—(*She hesitates.*)—for *you*—why, we can sell the place, you know. It ought to bring enough—land's valuable up here.

MAITLAND

But Nancy—you love it so.

NANCY

So do I love you.

MAITLAND

But it's yours—it's your own—

NANCY (*softly*)

Have I—anything—my own . . . ?

[MAITLAND *draws her to him.*

MAITLAND

Ah—my dear—(*A pause.*) I don't know what to do. I don't know—. This afternoon—I'll never admit that all Ronny said was right. But on one thing we were agreed—on a weakness of mine—(*There is a tinge of harshness in his forced gaiety.*)—a weakness, Nancy—that's what love is, in an artist! [*From the stairs comes the sound of whistling.*

NANCY

What was it she said?

[RICKY *comes in, softly continuing the tune the orchestra at the Duane's has been playing.*

MAITLAND (*with a gesture toward him*)

This—

RICKY

Ronny said you wanted to see me about something—(*He sits on a trunk and begins to whistle again, lowly. MAITLAND looks at him speculatively.*)—What is it, sir?

MAITLAND

Ricky—how do you feel?

RICKY (*with a short laugh*)

Well, Father, if you really want to know, I feel like holy hell.

MAITLAND

I thought so.

RICKY

But I promised to act like a little soldier. And when a fellow lets himself in for something, he's got to see it through, hasn't he? So—(*He whistles a bar.*)—Cheero!

[*And goes on whistling moodily.*]

MAITLAND

When—a fellow does *what*?

RICKY

Lets himself in for something—

[*He returns again to his whistling. MAITLAND is in a study. Suddenly his brow clears, and he speaks spiritedly.*]

MAITLAND

Rick, how'd you like to go abroad—as you planned?

[*RICKY glances at him quickly.*]

RICKY

What? (*A thoughtful pause.*)—Take the wherewithal from you? No—thanks a lot—but it can't be done. I'll manage all right in some New York office.

NANCY

That's the *you* in him speaking, Matey.

[*MAITLAND thinks rapidly for a moment.*]

MAITLAND

—But I've good news for you.—When you were born, your grandfather took out an endowment policy in your name. You're supposed to get it when you're thirty—a yearly income of about two thousand, for a term of five years.

RICKY

But—I'm only—

MAITLAND

—Hubbard's the executor. This afternoon he told me that it can come to you now—provided I consider you old enough to expend it properly.

RICKY

Lord, Father—that's knock-out news—

MAITLAND

—And if you and Ronny are careful, it's enough to take her with you. Together, you'll have four thousand a year. You'll do better work than you would if you had more—

RICKY

But Ronny doesn't—

MAITLAND

Let me finish! Son—the happiness of a man's family can mean a lot to him—a tremendous lot. So if you've something you feel it's your destiny to do—something out of the beaten track—unusual—difficult—you'd better begin your married life doing it.

NANCY (*quietly*)

And if you don't?

MAITLAND

The chances are it will never be done.

[RICKY *looks from one to the other, bewildered.*]

RICKY

But listen—

NANCY (*to MAITLAND*)

Then what—?

[*For a moment MAITLAND's head sinks. He lifts it again, smiling.*]

MAITLAND

Why—then, I suppose, you turn philosopher.

NANCY

—Philosophy—to fill an empty heart. It must be rather dreadful. . . .

MAITLAND

. . . It *would* be—if one's heart *were* empty. But when it's full already—well—habit has a way of changing destinies, don't you think? (*He laughs shortly.*)—How's that—for philosophy?

[NANCY *turns away.*]

RICKY

Wait a minute,—I'm in a perfect fog.—You're sure you don't need that money yourself?—It's yours, you know—(MAITLAND *shakes his head decisively.*) Then it—oh, it'd be—I mean, you simply couldn't beat it. Lord, how I'd work—. But as for Ronny—(*He looks up, smiling.*)—She doesn't want me. . . .

MAITLAND

Tell her what I've told you—and see what she says.

[RICKY *looks at him searchingly.*]

RICKY

Father—*what do you know—?*

MAITLAND (*with sudden sharpness*)

Never mind what I know! Stop arguing, and try it—quickly—before your luck changes!

[RICKY turns and starts for the stairs as fast as he can. NANCY picks up the guitar from the trunk.]

NANCY

Ricky—! (*He stops, and she holds it out to him.*)
Here—

[*He comes back, and takes it.*]

RICKY (*breathlessly*)

Thanks, Dearest. (*He kisses her, hastily.*) I love you.

[*He makes the stairs in record time and goes out.*]

NANCY turns accusingly to MAITLAND.

NANCY

His grandfather did nothing of the sort.

MAITLAND

I know he didn't. But he wouldn't have taken it from me—not for both of them.

NANCY

Are you certain you're acting wisely?

MAITLAND

Wisdom has nothing to do with love, my dear.

NANCY (*a stilled voice*)

Matey—if this is failure, it's a kind I've never seen before.

MAITLAND (*brightly*)

Why—you talk as though I'd given it up entirely!

Didn't you hear me arrange with G. T. for time to—?

NANCY (*with a hopeless gesture*)

Week-ends?

MAITLAND

Yes—and bye-and-bye when Ricky's on his feet, and Jean is married—

[NANCY *buries her head in his shoulder.*

NANCY (*pitying him with her whole heart*)

Oh—*Matey*—you'll be nearly fifty!

MAITLAND

You call that old!?

NANCY (*clinging to him*)

I don't like the look of this—at all—not at all—
[MAITLAND *holds her to him, staring fixedly into space over her shoulder. The orchestra at the Duanes' begins to play a waltz. His face brightens.*

MAITLAND (*as briskly as he can*)

Well—if we're going to the dance, I'd better get into costume. (*He blows out the candles, and NANCY turns out the lamps, leaving the room lighted only by the moonlight, which faintly illuminates the small windows, and flows strongly through the great dormer upon the portrait, and upon NANCY. A shaft of pale light lights the stairs from below. MAITLAND takes one last look at the portrait and then goes to NANCY.*)
—What hideous disguise have you got for me?

NANCY

The usual—a matador.

MAITLAND

No!—To-night I shall be something different.

NANCY (*dully*)

But there isn't anything.

MAITLAND

Yes, there is—(*He picks up his smock and holds it out for her to see.*) I am going, my love—(*The smock envelops him now, and he turns to give NANCY the full picture as he stands there, a parody of himself and his hopes.*)—as an artist!

[*NANCY's hand goes out to him in a little vain protest. He takes the red Spanish berét from the animal's head on the wall and sets it jauntily upon his own. He lifts "Genevieve" from the hobby horse, and takes NANCY's arm through his. The three cross toward the stairs, MAITLAND with his head high—"Genevieve" on one arm, NANCY a tragic figure on the other—whistling the waltz with the orchestra.*]

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